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A

*Richard Dooley,
Holmesdale.*

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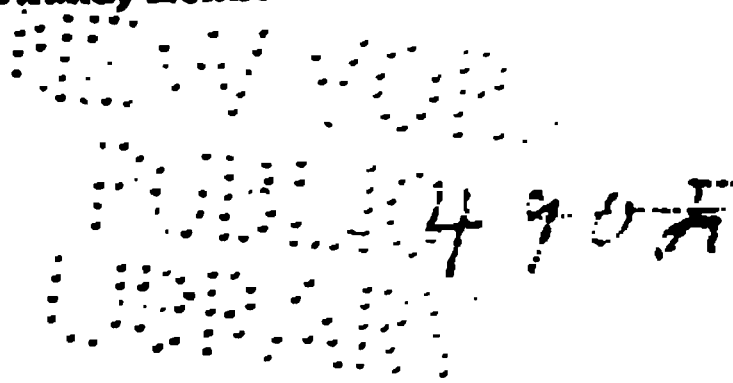
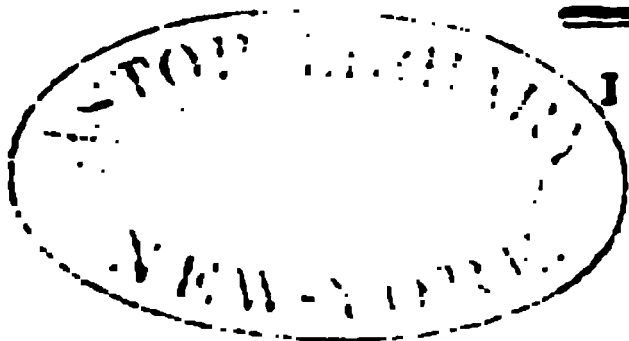
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J. BRYANT.

T O

THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE,
AND MONTGOMERY,
BARONESS HERBERT, &c. &c.

FROM some pleasing conferences, with which you have at times honoured me, I should judge, that the following treatise may not prove unacceptable, if it is introduced to your notice. It relates to that great and interesting object of pursuit, Religion; which you have made the subject of your thoughts and inquiries. Upon this account I venture to prefix your very honourable

A 3

nourable name for a recommendation, and to solicit your acceptance of this mark of my sincere respect, and esteem. In the prosecution of my purpose it has been my endeavour to avoid all prolixity from an unnecessary accumulation of evidence; especially such as is foreign, and too remote. For the mind is fatigued by being overloaded; and too much light tends often to dazzle, and confuse, rather than illustrate. It is not however my intention to abridge myself of any material article, that may tend to conviction; but only to restrain myself from being too diffuse; and not to engage myself in the depths of science and philosophy for an aggregate of unwieldy * proofs. For I never found, that a multiplicity of instances, and illustrations, were so convincing, as a few well-

* The proofs to which I allude, may be found in Ray, Nieuwentyt, Derham, Grew, Cheyne, Stillingfleet, and others: and are well worth consulting, though too abundant to be noticed by me.

digested

digested arguments, fairly stated, and strongly enforced. A single dart may be made to sink deeper, than a cloud of arrows ill directed. An instance to this purpose I once experienced; the history of which, with your permission, I will lay before you.

In one of those years, when I was in camp with your truly Noble Father, the Duke of Marlborough; an officer of my acquaintance desired me, upon my making a short excursion, to take him with me in my carriage. Our conversation was rather desultory, as is usual upon such occasions: and among other things he asked me, rather abruptly, what were my notions about religion. I answered evasively, or at least indeterminately, as his inquiry seemed to proceed merely from an idle curiosity; and I did not see that any happy consequence could ensue from an explanation. However some time afterwards he made me a visit at my

house,

house, and stayed with me a few days. During this interval, one evening he put the question to me again; and at the same time added, that he should be really obliged, if I would give him my thoughts in general upon the subject. Upon this I turned towards him, and after a short pause told him, that my opinion lay in a small compass: and he should have it in as compendious a manner, as the subject would permit. Religion, I said, is either true, or false. This is the alternative: there is no medium. If it be the latter,—merely an idle system, and a *cunningly-devised fable: let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.* The world is before us, let us take all due advantage, and choose, what may seem best. For we have no prospect of any life to come; much less any assurances. But if religion be a truth, it is the most serious truth of any, with which we can possibly be engaged: an article of the greatest importance. It demands our
most

most diligent inquiry to obtain a knowledge of it; and a fixed resolution to abide by it, when obtained. For religion teaches us, that this life bears no proportion to the life to come. You see then, my good friend, that an alternative of the utmost consequence lies before you. Make therefore your election, as you may judge best; and Heaven direct you in your determination. He told me that he was much affected with the crisis, to which I brought the object of inquiry: and I trust, that it was attended with happy consequences afterwards.

Such, Madam, is our situation: and on whichever side the truth may lie, the subject, as I said above, merits our most diligent inquiry. But from whence are we to begin? Undoubtedly from the existence, and attributes of the Supreme Being. For as religion, about which we are to inquire, is a law; there must be a lawgiver to give it a sanction: and that lawgiver must be ultimately

mately the Creator, and Conservator, of all things ; otherwise it cannot be of divine institution. Upon this foundation the whole fabric rests. It will therefore be necessary to ascertain this great truth, before we proceed to others, which are deducible from it.

Such then is my purpose ; which with the most true regard and deference is humbly submitted to your candour by,

M A D A M,

Your much obliged

And most obedient humble Servant,

J A C O B B R Y A N T.

C O N-

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I.

Of the DEITY and his Attributes.

THE first article to be proved is, that there has been something through all eternity: for if there had been originally nothing, there could have been no produce: no derivative either good or evil. Nothing could have been effected, if there were no efficient cause: for an effect without a cause cannot be conceived. If then there has been something original during the whole process of time, that something must have been the source of all; the great Creator and Conservator of the world. As he created all things, he must be all-powerful: and as the whole is done with consummate wisdom, he must be all-knowing, and all-wise: and as he has existed through a boundless duration, he must persevere through the like without end;

B

end ; for the great self-existent Being, by whom all things are directed, can never be liable to any impediment : nor to any detriment, or decay. He must likewise be all-good, and all-just ; for infinite wisdom is not consistent with depravity : nor can there be any possible inducement for his being otherwise. He therefore, and he only, is perfect. We may therefore safely subscribe to the first article of our Church, which tells us, that *there is but one living and true God; everlasting, without body, parts, or passions : of infinite power, wisdom and goodness : the maker and conservator of all things, both visible, and invisible.*

Of the supposed Eternity of Matter.

If we were to grant, what some of the ancients blindly maintained, that matter was eternal ; yet the consequence would be nearly the same : for dull, inanimate, matter could not possess intellect and design ; it could not modify itself, nor perform those mighty operations, by which the world was produced. This made the celebrated philosopher

sopher * Athenagoras, who saw this difficulty, add intellect, as a concomitant to matter. But instead of adding, he should have superinduced it, and made the Eternal Mind the original ; and matter with all its variations, posterior and subordinate.

Concerning Chance, and the Atomical System.

But it may be said, that *chance, and a fortuitous concurrence of atoms might possibly have produced the world.* Chance is a term without meaning. Besides, give chance all the ideal efficacy, that can be conceived, yet who ever found a coin self-formed in a mine of gold, or a busto or statue in a quarry of granite or marble ; or a well-defined diagram upon a newly-dug slab of slate ? Did chance ever produce a single plinth ? No. Much less a wall of brick ; much less a suit of regular rooms ; much less a house with all its appertenances. But the most superb edifice, that ever was con-

* He was of Clazomenæ in Asia Minor, and the preceptor of Socrates at Athens, where he resided. He was born near five hundred years before Christ.

ceived and constructed, would not equal the smallest insect, blest with sight, feeling, and locomotivity. If then chance could not perform these more ordinary operations singly, it could never produce the whole world, so great, so various, and so replete with wisdom ; and particularly those beings, with which it is peopled. Many of these are gifted, not only with motion and activity, but with senses for perception ; also with thought, memory, and recollection ; and above all, with reason to regulate the whole. None of these could have proceeded from an unconscious mass, nor from that equivocal and ideal parent chance. Besides, whence came the atoms, upon which chance was to operate ? This was first to have been shewn, but was never considered.

Of an infinite Series.

Some have surmised, that the whole series of Beings, which has been lengthened out in succession for ages, may have reached from all eternity : and consequently was
not

not produced, but original, and self-existent. Now we know, that these Beings are singly, perishable, changeable, and dependent; how then can they be collectively everlasting, and without support? If we were told, that such a series of Beings came into the world without any cause, or antecedent efficacy, five hundred, or one hundred, years ago; the notion would be esteemed puerile, and not worthy of consideration. To extend such a chain upwards to infinity, does not alter the purport. The only difference seems to be this: in the first instance the opinion is absurd; in the latter infinitely absurd. For how can dependent Beings subsist unsupported?

Let us then abide by this plain truth, that where there is design, there must have been a designer; where there is art, there must have been an artist. The print of a foot in the sand intimates, that an animal made it; from the impression of a figure upon wax, we judge of the seal that impressed it. If then the world is replete with marks of consummate wisdom, it is certainly the offspring of divine intelligence,

ligence, and the author must have been prior to his work.

These truths afford a strong argument in favour of divine revelation, and of those sacred volumes, in which they are contained. These volumes were intrusted to the care of a particular people, among whom only the knowledge of the true God was in its original purity preserved, when the rest of the world was immersed in darkness. And when another dispensation took place, this knowledge was more precisely defined by the sacred writers, and more generally diffused for the benefit of mankind. From hence we may judge of the divine authority of those writings, in which only this great truth is to be found.

Of the Knowledge of God in the Gentile World.

I am sensible, that there are persons who maintain, that the knowledge both of God and his attributes, was well known to the ancients. This has been spoken in a very unlimited manner, without any regard either
to

to time or place. Hence we are led to infer, that this divine knowledge was to be discovered at all times, and among all nations. But when we come to inquire, who these ancients were, we find them to be only the people of Greece and its colonies, who bore but a small proportion among the kingdoms of the earth. And when we look into the time, we find it to be a few years before the birth of Socrates, which is comparatively late in the era of mankind. Hence, though light at this period might have dawned upon them, yet the greater part of the wide world was under a total eclipse, without all hopes of day. This was the case both at that time, and for ages antecedent, excepting only the family of the selected people. Hence, what is urged by these writers, does not at all take off from the necessity of revelation, and the interposition of divine goodness for the improvement and salvation of man. Besides, this knowledge did not originate among the Grecians; it was * imported,

* Origen contra Celsum, L. 6. p. 288. edit. Cantab.

and but partially received, and not duly maintained. Those, who like Plato, did adopt it, seem to have used it merely as a speculative point, so that it had little influence upon their lives or morals, no more than a theorem of Euclid or Diophantus. Hence they indulged like others in all the gratifications which the world afforded, followed the base worship of their country, and ^{engaged} engaged at the rites of the most vile and obscene deities. How partially and imperfectly it took place, may be seen in a Treatise of * Cicero concerning Providence, and the Nature of the Gods. The persons, who are introduced as speaking upon this subject, were well versed in the learning and philosophy of their country, and all the accumulated knowledge of Greece; yet though the subject was of such importance, and the speakers so knowing, Cicero gives us at the close this unsatisfactory account, *that one of them seemed nearer to the truth, and the other had more the semblance of truth*: but to the truth itself they never

* L. 3. C. 39. p. 1246. Gronov.

attained,

attained. The Grecian writers undoubtedly at times disclose some excellent doctrines: which taken singly and detached, cannot fail of exciting our admiration. But they generally shew that they borrowed them, by their not comprehending their true purport; which they ruin by their subsequent comment. Thus in an early treatise, ascribed to one of the first-rate philosophers, mention is made of the Creation, and of that Power, by which it was created; and the whole in terms not unworthy of Moses *. It is an ancient tradition transmitted universally, that *all things were from God, and constituted by him. Nor is there any Being in the world that is sufficient to maintain itself, when deprived of his salutary help.* From hence one would judge, that this writer had a just notion of the Deity and his attributes, and especially of his infinite power. But he witnesses the contrary very soon. He accordingly tells us, that God resides in the chief and highest part of the world, enjoying the prin-

* Aristotle de Mundo, C. 6. § 2 and 3.

cipal

cipal seat above all others. And he describes him as a local and limited being: that he acts first, and more fully, upon those bodies, that are nearest to him: and then upon others farther off; his influence and power being inversely as his distance. He proceeds to inform us, that all enjoy this influence more or * less: but that the inhabitants of the earth are least affected, as being the farthest of all; and this is the cause of that debility and uncertainty to which they are liable, and of all the disorders which prevail among them. From hence we are taught that this influence, which, he says, penetrated every where, barely reached the surface of the earth; at least it went very little farther. Those, therefore, who lived near the poles, must have enjoyed the blessing obliquely, and in the same proportion as they did the light of the sun. They must have been one half of the year in mental twilight or total darkness. But these notions of the ancients were base and low. How very different are the words of the

* C. 3. at the end.

sacred

sacred writers, when they address that infinite Being, by whom they were created and sustained? * *Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to Hades, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, peradventure, the darkness shall cover (and conceal) me, then shall my night be turned unto day. † But will God indeed dwell upon earth?* says the royal preacher. *Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; much less the house that I have made.—Again—‡ The heaven is my throne, saith the Lord, and the earth my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me; or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?* The sublimity of these passages, and the truths which they contain, manifestly shew the superiority of the Scrip-

* Psalm cxxxix. 7, 8, &c.

† 1 Kings viii. 27.

‡ Acts vii. 49.—Isaiah lxvi. 1. &c.

tures over the writings of the Gentile world. And from the ignorance of the philosophers, and the darkness in which the world was involved, we learn the necessity of revelation.

Concerning the Light of Nature.

There are, however, some, who deny this necessity. They insist, that without any revelation, the *light* of nature will plainly discover to us a first cause: and the *law* of nature will enforce its worship, and all other moral duties. But, as I have before said, I cannot conceive that any law can be binding, which has not a lawgiver to give it his sanction. I cannot help doubting of its existence. And as to the *light* of nature, which is supposed to afford such universal information, how came it to fail in the many instances, which I have produced? If so many persons of learning, who sought diligently for the truth, mist of it, how can we imagine that it would be found among people, who did not search after it, among the Celts and Scythæ, among the Asiatic tribes
of

of wandering Arabs, or the wild hords of Getulians, and Garamantians in the deserts of Africa? The philosopher Cicero however is persuaded, that *there was never any nation so very rude and barbarous, which had not some notion of the Gods* *. And though people might not † know which God out of many to adopt, yet all were persuaded, that some God was to be worshipped. And this opinion he thinks is innate: and the same is said by ‡ Seneca. The authority of these philosophers has often been applied to, in order to shew, that there is in the minds of all men an original imprinted idea of the Deity, and that it has universally prevailed at all times, and in all places. But the whole has been grievously misapplied; for what these learned men allude to, and would enforce, is the worship of their national gods, and the gods of other countries; all which tended to the exclusion of the true God; of whom they make no mention, and of whom they had no true

* Cicero, Tusc. Q. L. 1. § 13. p. 1145. Gronov. ed.

† Cicero de Leg. L. 1. § 8. p. 1288.

‡ Senecæ Epist. 117. p. 577. vol. 2. Var.

idea.

idea. The whole, that is said above, relates to superstition and idolatry, and to a plurality of Deities. The words therefore of these philosophers have been by no means understood: for they militate against the very purpose for which they were introduced. The true God was not to be found amid that herd of monsters: nor did the honours paid to them relate to his worship. It is said, *that they did not know which to adopt*. In truth, there was not one worth *adopting*. It is therefore idle to conclude, that among these base divinities the only true God was included. The Apostle St. * Paul bears witness to this truth, when he tells the Galatians, that there was a time when they *knew not God*; and he adds, at that time *ye did service to them, which by nature are no Gods*.

The Notion base, and of a bad Tendency.

Such opinions may be in some degree pardonable in the writers above mentioned,

* Galat. iv. 8.—The Apostle mentions in another place, that the world with all its wisdom *knew not God*. 1 Cor. i. 21.
and

and in other philosophers, who held the same tenets. They were excellent men in their day, who laboured after the truth; and made great advances, though they could never attain to the blessing, and who thought, that any worship was better than none. But the same allowance will not perhaps be made to Mr. Pope: who goes beyond the Heathen in his sentiments: and who thinks that all rites, however base, and all idolatry, however gross and shocking, related ultimately to the worship of the one true God. This is to be seen in the first stanza of his celebrated paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer:

Father of all, in ev'ry age,
 In ev'ry clime ador'd,
 By Saint, by Savage, and by Sage,
 Jehovah, Jove, and Lord.

It must hurt a truly pious mind, to see the Creator of all things, the everlasting God, Jehovah, brought upon a level with Jupiter, and Baal, (who is the same, as *Lord*) and (as we find intimated) with all the foul and horrid deities of the Pagan world. Who would imagine that the God of all

a

purity

purity and holiness could be represented not only by Jupiter, Bacchus, and Vulcan, but by Pan and Priapus, by Baal Peor, and Moloch, and by all the monsters of Egypt, and of the most savage nations: that their rites were his rites; and their mad orgies performed to his honour? Yet these notions Mr. Pope recommends. Thus has this excellent Poet sacrificed truth to rhythm, antithesis, and an affected alliteration. But God forbid, that we should suppose, that there was the least connexion between these widely different objects: for as the Apostle says—* *What communion hath light with darkness? what concord hath Christ with Belial?* The rites of these supposed divinities were obscene and horrid beyond imagination; and so far were the base objects of this worship from having any relation to the supreme Deity, that they are said repeatedly to be devils, and no gods: and the whole of the divine institution under Moses was to preserve one portion of mankind from this general

* 2 Corinth. vi. 15.

defection,

defection, that God's name might not be totally lost by the introduction of these demons. They are always mentioned in Scripture with detestation; and their worship as abominable: and their votaries are upbraided for their folly, as well as wickedness. * *They sacrificed to devils, and not to God:—† And they served idols, which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils. And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons, and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. ‡ They have forsaken me (saith the Lord) and have burnt incense unto other gods. They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal. § They made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments. || Every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they,*

* Deut. xxxii. 17.

† Psalm cvi. 36, 37, 38.

‡ Jeremiah xix. 4, 5.
xii. 31.

§ 2 Kings xvii. 16, 17. || Deut.

the Canaanites, *done to, or in honour of, their gods. Even their sons and their daughters have they burnt in the fire to their gods.*—The Israelites are upbraided for suffering themselves to be seduced from the true God to the worship of these ideal divinities. * *Hath a nation changed their gods? which are yet no gods: but my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit: that is, for a deity of no efficacy or power. Be ye astonished, O ye heavens, at this.*—Again—† *Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them, which are no gods.* And St. Paul tells the ‡ Galatians—*When ye knew not God, ye did service unto them, who by nature are no gods.*

Of People in a State of Nature.

When therefore some of the philosophers insisted, that no nation was so barbarous, as not to have some § religion; we

* Jerem. ii. 11, 12. † Jerem. v. 7. ‡ Gal. iv. 8.

§ Some of those, who allowed a God, denied his Providence. *Nihil curare Deum, nec sui, nec alieni. The Deity never troubles himself about any business of his own, nor of any body else.* Cicero. de Leg. L. 1. p. 1287. § 7. b.

must not from thence conclude, that the name of the true God was there known, or his worship carried on. There was no relation between the Lord of Light, and these infernal demons; who were worshipped out of fear, and became the dread of their votaries. The nations of the earth in general had their mental powers very much obscured; especially those, who were remote, and had no opportunities of cultivation. So far from entertaining any innate idea of the Supreme Being, there is reason to think, that they could not, without a miracle, have conceived any just notion of him. For we may judge of those times of darkness by the darkness which still prevails. There are many nations upon earth, of whom we are credibly informed, that, from their debility of mind, they are incapable of being instructed in any essential religious doctrine. How can those come to the knowledge of the true God, who have not words in their language to express any of his attributes, by which only he can be made known? Such

for the most part are the Samoids, Ostiaks, and Tonguses, and the other inhabitants near the great Siberian Sea. South America consists of an immense tract of country, the mediterranean part of which is filled with a variety of savage nations. An honest missionary, Labat, confessed, that it was impossible to convert them; for they wanted words to express, and ideas to conceive, those essential truths, upon which religion is founded. He accordingly told * Tamburini, the General of the Jesuits, that his missionaries had effected nothing in respect to religion. He asserted the same before Clement the Eleventh, at that time pope: and insisted, that before the Americans could be converted, they must be made men: for they were to the last degree savage, and incapable of conceiving instruction. They consequently could have no idea of God; for they had no terms to express his attributes. To this Mr. de la Condamine bears witness, who had been

* See the General History of the Church, by Dr. Mosheim, Vol. II. p. 306. Note o; and Labat. tom. viii. p. 7.

conversant

conversant with many nations of Indians in South America; and particularly upon that vast tract of country, which is watered by the river Marañon. * Toutes les langues, dit-il, dont j'ai eu connoissance dans cette partie du monde, sont fort pauvres.—Toutes manquent de termes pour exprimer les idées abstraites et universelles.—Tems, durée, espace, être, substance, matiere, corps, tous ces mots, et beaucoup d'autres, n'ont point d'équivalent dans leurs langues. Non seulement les noms des Etres métaphysiques, mais ceux des Etres moraux ne peuvent se rendre chez eux q'imparfaitement. † He tells us, that this incapacity proceeds from their paucity of ideas, which extend not beyond the necessities of life: that they are incapable of foresight and reflection; and that the Indians of the Missions, and the wild Indians, are equally limited in their conceptions; not to say equally stupid. From hence, says the au-

* See Histoire General des Voiages, Vol. XIII. p. 572.

† See the Voyage of Mons. de la Condamine, Translation, p. 26, 27. See also p. 106.

thor, one cannot observe without being mortified, how little a man, left wholly to the guidance of mere nature, differs from the brutes. He speaks of them in general as being without any idea of religion.

The Moravians, who have established two Missions, the one in Greenland, and the other in Labrador, are sensible of the like incapacity among the natives. Those of the former department, though they have long laboured to make converts of the people, yet confess, that they cannot bring them to be rational Deists. *They have experienced (says * Crantz) how little is effected by first endeavouring to make them rational creatures; and then † proving the existence*
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* Hist. of Greenland, and of the Mission, &c. Vol. II. p. 424.

† Instead therefore of these attributes of the Deity, and these duties, the Moravians substitute the blood and wounds of Christ; particularly the washing in his blood, and the basking, like worms, in his wounds. These articles occur continually in the letters and discourses of the Greenlanders, published by Crantz. *Thou gavest food to my soul, when thou concerning the Saviour's blood, death and wounds didst instruct me. No other thing can rejoice me, but the Redeemer's*
death,

*and the attributes of God: and from thence enforcing the consequent duties. He says, that they tried for years, and nothing was effected. * Niecamp gives a like account of the Tamuli, and other tribes upon the coast of Malabar. A missionary, he says, should consider, before he thinks of introducing, what may be thought the principal object of information: and ought to know, how little he can influence his pagan disciples by any moral arguments concerning the attributes of the Deity; and the various duties, in which virtue consists. The idea therefore of God and his perfections must be very partially*

death, his passion, his blood and wounds. p. 447. On our Saviour's sufferings, death and wounds I think daily, and hourly. p. 450. John Ludwig to his last moments was continually pointing at the wounds of our Saviour in his hands and his feet. p. 452. Our Saviour has set me free by his wounds and bloody sweat. p. 454. I hide myself daily in our Saviour's open side.—I suck his blood, like a suckling child. p. 456. Just as the little birds hide in the rock cliffs, in the same manner do I go in, and out in the wounds of our Saviour: and I lay my heart, beneath the bleeding side of Jesus, to drink there. p. 463. And now I kiss thee out of the innermost part of Jesus' wounds. p. 455. Ye wounds, ye are all venerable to me, but I address myself more to one of them:—it is my favourite bit. Hymn of Count Zinzendorph. See Rinius, note, p. 43.

* B. I. L. Niecamp, *Hist. Missionis in India Orientali*, Halæ, 1747, p. 100.

maintained in some of these nations ; and in others it must be totally unknown. Had nature implanted in them any first principles, there could have been no difficulty in reviving that latent intelligence, with which they had been previously gifted.

If then there were any innate idea of the Deity ; any moral sense, and original truths, impressed upon the minds of men, we should, I * think, find them genuine, and unsophisticated, among these remote and undisciplined tribes. But of this we meet with no instance. Have then these ideas been effaced ? Certainly not : for they could not lose, what they never possessed ; and what they are incapable, even with instruction, of obtaining. We are told, that no improvements can possibly be made, till they become humanized ; and then by a gradual civilization prepared for these truths.

If then this be the state of the world in some parts at this day ; and if this darkness was of old still more prevalent, and attended with the most horrid and flagi-

* I speak with diffidence ; because there are persons of much learning and good sense of a contrary opinion.

tious practices, it shews, what I have repeatedly urged, the necessity of revelation for the everlasting benefit of mankind: and the blessing of God to make it take effect.

It may be asked, why that influence, and those helps, which obtained of old under the Apostles, do not still in the same degree prevail; and why the labours of the missionaries are for the most part so ineffectual? I answer, that two reasons may be given. In the first place, the church of God has been for many ages established; and does not want that miraculous interposition, of which at first it stood in need. In the next place we must consider, that the Christian religion is a system of reason; and the missionaries above seem to have nothing rational in their process. The Jesuits of Paraguay introduced a specious kind of idolatry, under the sanction of the name of Jesus: which could afford no real edification. The others say little of God, and his attributes; or of that mental purity, and reasonable service required. In the room of these they have substituted
a repe-

a repetition of the same words, attended with the same carnal ideas; from which no spiritual information can possibly be derived. They all shew, and most of them confess, that the essentials of Christianity are wanting; and that they do not *attempt* to make their converts *rational creatures*. How then can we expect the Divine influence to interfere towards the promoting of a defective and irrational worship?

II.

CONCERNING THE CANON OF
SCRIPTURE, AND THE AU-
THORITIES IN ITS FAVOUR.

NO histories whatever, that have been transmitted from ancient times, are supported with that variety of proofs, with which the sacred writings are attended. Josephus a learned Jew, who was born about five years after the death of our Saviour, has given us a list of the Books of the Old Testament; as they stood in his time; and as they had been transmitted for ages. He has likewise afforded us the history itself, which he wrote in the Greek language. And though it is modified, and adapted to the taste of the Grecians, yet it contains most of the principal events, as described in the original. But of all the versions, however numerous, that of the Septuagint is of the greatest consequence. It

It is a translation of the Old Testament in the Greek language ; which was performed in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, about three hundred years before the birth of Christ. One proof of its antiquity may be seen in its being quoted by the Apostles. As we find here all the prophecies of the Old Testament, particularly those which related both to our Saviour, and to the Jews, and which were afterwards manifestly compleated ; it shews, that these prophecies could not be the invention of man. They must originally have proceeded from Divine inspiration ; for they were antecedent to the event. The Books of Moses are of great consequence : and these have been additionally preserved by the Samaritans, who received them near seven hundred years before the birth of Christ. As they hated the Jews, and were detested by them, they never could co-operate towards any material alteration. Their mutual jealousies prevented any collusion. In consequence of this we find a general conformity between their copies, and those of the Jews. The
Samaritans

Samaritans remain at this day ; and by some are supposed to have the original copy, which they received, when they first settled in Samaria. There are also Gentile writers, who give evidence to some of the principal histories, such as the antediluvian state of man, and the deluge, and to many subsequent events. But above all others the Jews themselves afford the strongest proof to the present purpose. For they remain a standing miracle, being, as was foretold, scattered over the face of the earth ; and every where retaining those sacred records, in which their future rejection was denounced. Nothing but a judicial infatuation can prevent their seeing, what so nearly concerns their happiness. But this cloud must remain, till they have fulfilled the high purposes of the Deity. That the whole is mysterious and of divine appointment we may learn from St. Paul's address to the Jews of his time at Rome. *For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery (lest you should be wise in your own conceits) that blindness in part hath happened to Israel:*
until

until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.
 Romans xi. 25. In consequence of this blindness the Jews, who are the greatest enemies to Christianity, have preserved the strongest proofs in favour of the Gospel. They shew to a demonstration, that the Christians have not altered the books of Moses and of the Prophets.

The prophecies thus preserved are various ; many of which relate to kingdoms and nations, long since ruined, and annihilated, according to the doom denounced upon them. Those upon Tyre were accomplished in a most wonderful manner : and those upon Babylon still more wonderfully compleated. But there are two, with which I shall chiefly concern myself at present ; as they are closely connected with the mission of our Saviour, and the events which were to ensue upon his coming. Of these the one foretold the rejection of the Jews, to which I above alluded : and the other the calling of the Gentiles, and their admission to the church of Christ. The purport of these prophecies is plain and obvious to the last degree :
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but through every age overlooked, or mistaken, by the Jews. They never could be persuaded, that these prophecies related to themselves.

Of the Messiah promised, and the Rejection of the Jewish Nation.

The first of these two prophecies was given to the children of Israel in the wilderness by Moses; at the time, when he was declaring the other ordinances of God. *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me : unto him ye shall hearken.* Deut. xviii. 15. Now the great characteristic of Moses was that of a lawgiver, sent by God with a miraculous power to make known his statutes to Israel. He was to conduct them from a state of bondage to a promised land, a land of peace and liberty; which upon their good behaviour they were to enjoy. But no one of the race of Israel ever attained to this character, or was to be compared to Moses, except Christ, the Messiah Prince. He was like him, but far
his

his superior. The likeness consisted in his being a lawgiver, who declared a new law from heaven, which he certified by a miraculous process. He likewise was the great conductor of God's people through a wilderness in a state of pilgrimage; and displayed to their view a better habitation, which they were to enjoy for ever. He therefore, and he only, was the person, who at any time could be said to be like to Moses. The Jews themselves confess, that no one antecedent to Christ could claim the character of Messiah; and we are certain, that nobody since had any pretensions to it. We may therefore be assured, that he was the prophet pointed out of old, to whom they were commanded to hearken. In consequence of this, our blessed Saviour, when the Jews had endeavoured to kill him for raising a man to life upon the sabbath-day, accuses them of their hardness of heart; and bids them, as they would not believe his works, apply to the prophecies concerning him. *Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they, which testify of me.—Do not think, that*

that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. John v. 39, and 45, 46. Then comes the following part of the prophecy, which, if we duly attend to it, will be found of great consequence. Moses had said, The Lord shall raise thee up a prophet of thy brethren—and he proceeds to tell them, that he should be introduced as they had requested.—According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see the great fire any more. At the assembly here mentioned, when the law was given at Horeb, it is said, that Mount Sinai was altogether in a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke of it ascended like the smoke of a furnace: and the whole mount quaked greatly. And there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount. Exodus xix. 16, 18. And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain

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*smoking : and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, speak thou with us, and we will bear ; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. Chap. xx. 18, 19.—*And the Lord said, *They have well spoken. Accordingly they were to have upon the coming of the second lawgiver, the prophet, whom God was to raise up to them like unto Moses, all that they desired in Horeb. He therefore came without those terrors, with which the law was given, and with a milder and more gentle display of miracles : which however were more significant, and superior in their operation to the former. Moses then repeats the promise of God, which he had before mentioned, and comes to the conclusion, which is of great importance. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee ; and will put my words in his mouth : and he shall speak to them, all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken to my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him : or as the Greek has it—I will*
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avenge myself upon him. Deut. xviii. 18, 19.

It is well known, that the land of Judea was conquered by the Babylonians, the city Jerusalem burnt, and ruined, and the people, for their idolatry, led into captivity. After a term of seventy years they were wonderfully brought back; and their city and polity restored. As they had smarted so severely for their apostacy, they never more returned to the worship of idols. On the contrary they adhered strictly to the law of Moses; and additionally to this they observed numberless rites, and customs according to the traditions of their elders: such was their zeal, and sense of ceremonial duty. But at the same time they offended greatly by their neglect of morality, and true religion. For this our Saviour with proper severity continually upbraids them. But still there were other nations as bad. This therefore was not the principal reason for the severity, which they experienced, when those evils came upon them. Our Saviour foretold, and described what was to happen—as—*great tribulation, such*

as was not from the beginning of the world to this time: no, nor ever shall be. Matt. xxiv. 21. The chief cause of these uncommon calamities, which Josephus so amply verifies, was their rejecting the Messiah, the Lord of life; *the prophet, whom God raised up to them, like unto Moses, and in whose mouth he put his words.* Who came to them, as they had requested, not in the terrors of Horeb, but in a milder course of miracles, yet of greater efficacy; by which his mission was manifestly declared. These were attended with instances of the greatest goodness, and compassion; of grace and truth; and the most consummate virtue, without the least allay. But they despised his virtues; and shewed an inveteracy to his person, and an obdurate hatred of his ministry. His miracles were not performed out of ostentation, and as a mere display of power. On the contrary they were always necessary, and pertinent; and proceeded from the greatest benevolence, and good-will towards those, for whose sake he laboured. But the malignant Jews, contrary to conviction, ascribed them all to the powers of darkness; to *Beelzebub*

zebub the prince of the devils. And after a long course of persecution, and ingratitude, they at last accomplished their infernal designs, and crucified the Lord of life. In consequence of this all those accumulated evils came upon them; such as no nation, either before, or after, suffered. Our blessed Saviour, as we have shewn, foresaw them, and foretold their approach. And though he had experienced such baseness and ingratitude, and was further to submit to their cruelty; yet he overlooked his own sufferings, and with unparalleled compassion wept over their city, which was so soon to be brought to ruin. *Verily, says our Saviour—all these things shall come upon the present generation. O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them, which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as an hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate: for I say unto you, ye shall not henceforth (after I am once departed) see me more, till ye shall say—Blessed is he, that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Matt. xxiii. 36, 7, 8, 9.

St. Luke mentions the same, or a similar, circumstance, when our Saviour's soft feelings and tender compassion for this unfortunate people were shewn ; and when he more plainly intimated the manner of their ruin by the Romans. *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it : saying, if thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day, the things, that belong to thy peace—but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the day shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round ; and keep thee in on every side : and shall lay thee even with the ground ; and thy children within thee : and shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation : nor did they know the Prophet, who visited them. Luke xix. 41, &c.*—These judgments came very soon upon this devoted people, who filled up their measure of iniquity by crucifying the Messiah Prince, the Prophet raised up by God like to Moses. Jerusalem was soon after surrounded with armies, the people perished by thousands through pestilence, and famine : and after a series of calamities,

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such as no nation ever experienced before, they were totally subdued, and their kingdom ruined. The numbers that perished during the siege, and from the insurrections, which ensued, are by Josephus, and other writers, estimated at far more than * a million of souls. But the manner of their deaths, as related, was worse than death itself.

Of the Dispersion of the Jewish Nation.

But this is not all. They were, according to the prophecy of Moses, to be *scattered among all nations*; and they were to become *an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations, whither the Lord should lead them.* Deut. iv. 27. xxviii. 37. To their obedience all things were promised; but upon their neglect and rebellion, the severest punishment was denounced. *But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments, and his statutes, &c.—*

* See the Chronology of Archb. Usher, p. 652. According to him the numbers were 1,337,490.

the Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them, and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.—The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart. Deut. xxviii. 15—25—28. These threats took place in some degree, when the ten tribes were carried into captivity by Salmanezer, who placed them in the cities of Assyria, and of the Medes: and also, when Judea was not long after subdued by the Babylonians, and the people transplanted to Chaldea, and other countries. But above all, they were compleated, when Jerusalem was taken by the Romans under Titus Vespasian; at which time the people experienced an universal removal, and became scattered into very distant countries; and are to be found at this day in a state of exile, amid a variety of nations; few in number comparatively in respect to those nations; but sufficient, if collected, to form a mighty empire. Of this last captivity our Saviour gave warning, and counselled his disciples to flee from the evils which were at hand.—*When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know, that*

that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them, which are in Judea, flee to the mountains;—for these be the days of vengeance; that all things which be written, may be fulfilled.—And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Luke xxi. 20, &c.—At what time this final prediction will be compleated, can only be known by the all-wise God. In the mean time this widely separated people remain a continued miracle; and have so remained for ages. They are a lasting monument of prophetic veracity; and, wherever their fortune has driven them, they have been an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among nations.

Such is the history of the Jews, and their dispersion, to which we have nothing similar in the annals of time. They are admitted, and fixed, but never incorporated with any nation under heaven. They are every where distinct and unconverted; and, consequently enemies to the gospel. Rivers run downwards through many outlets to the sea:

sea: and are soon blended and lost in the ocean. But the Jews are like the waters of Styx, which remain unmixed, wherever they flow, and retain their bitterness to the last.

Concerning the calling of the Gentiles.

When it pleased God to choose the posterity of Abraham to be the conservators of his divine oracles, and to found his church among them, it was his design that they should be a separate people. He accordingly placed them in a land originally destined for them, and which was particularly adapted to this purpose. And he gave them laws, by which they were prohibited from having any people incorporated with them, who would not submit to their rites and religion. This was done, that the name and knowledge of the one true God might be preserved in this selected nation; when it was lost or obscured in the rest of the world. They were in consequence of this styled in the scriptures *a special, a peculiar, and a chosen people, and the sons of God.* But
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in time they carried this caution and this prerogative to a degree of extravagance. They looked upon themselves, as sanctified, and superior to all other people. This produced an unwarrantable disgust, and even abhorrence, towards other nations, with whom they never willingly would associate. Hence it was, that the woman of Samaria said to our Saviour, *How is it, that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?* and the Evangelist gives the reason—for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. John iv. 9. Nor did they countenance any intercourse with other more distant people. Hence St. Peter says to Cornelius the centurion, and those who were with him : *Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing* (that is—according to the national prejudices) *for a man, that is a Jew, to keep company with, or come unto, one of another nation. But God hath shewn me that I should not call any man common or unclean.* Acts x. 28. The Samaritans were so abhorred by the Jews, that when the latter thought to vent the most opprobrious language to our Saviour, they said—*Thou art*

art a Samaritan, and hast a devil. John viii. 48.

The Prejudices of the Jews in respect to this Article.

In consequence of this prepossession, nothing but a cogent, and supernatural influence, could have forced the prophets of old to disclose a truth, so contrary to their opinion, that the Gentiles (people of all nations under heaven) should in process of time be called, and become the people of God: that Christ, of whom they prophesied, should invite them, and that they should be admitted to his glorious dispensation. There were three things, which were impossible to have been carried into execution, without the manifest interposition of the Deity. First, that the prophets should, contrary to their inveterate prejudices, declare this truth: Secondly, that the apostles, under the like rooted prejudices, should admit the truth, and co-operate towards the conversion, and admission of the heathen nations. And lastly, that those nations, under equal prejudices,

prejudices, devoted to the religion of their fathers, and averse, as far as they were known, to the Jews, should accede to the truth, recommended by people, whom they held in no estimation. After all these comes another difficulty, without a miracle insuperable: which consists in the means requisite to carry on this great work. For these nations were widely separated: and as they were of different rites and manners, so they were of different languages. How then was it possible for a few illiterate men of Galilee, and their adherents, to win over to the gospel such variety of people, whom they could neither understand, nor be understood by them? Yet they did effect it: and nothing but the divine assistance could have brought it to perfection.

The first Difficulty.

In the process, which we are to pursue, we will first consider the most early predictions of the prophets concerning the calling of the Gentiles. And at the same time let it be remembered, what, I hope, has been
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most satisfactorily proved, that these predictions were certainly antecedent to the event. Isaiah, in his prophecies concerning the future Messiah, continually mentions his admission of the Gentiles to his dominion. *And there shall come forth a rod (or sceptre) out of the stem of Jesse: and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek.* Isaiah xi. 1, 2, and 10——*Behold my servant, whom I uphold: mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.* Isaiah xlii. 1.——*I have called thee in righteousness—for a light unto the Gentiles.* Isaiah xlii. 6.——*And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness: and all the kings thy glory.* Isaiah lxii. 2.——*And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.* Isaiah lx. 3.—To the same purpose speaks the prophet Jeremiah.—*The Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things, in which there is no profit.* Jeremiah

miah xvi. 19——The words of the prophet Malachi to this purpose are very particular. *I have no pleasure in you (ye house of Israel) saith the Lord of hosts: neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles—my name shall be great among the beathen.* Malachi i. 10 and 11.——The Psalmist introduces the Messiah, as mentioning the promise of God, that the Gentiles should be admitted to his kingdom.—*The Lord hath said—Ask of me, and I shall give thee the beathen for thine inheritance: and the farthest parts of the earth for thy possession.* Psalm ii. 8.—Here we see the rejection of the Jews strongly intimated; and the admission of the Gentile nations declared. Thus we find these holy men foretelling an event, quite contrary to the popular opinion, when there appeared not the least probability of its being fulfilled. No human forecast could have conceived it.

The same intimation was given long afterwards, when the prophet Simeon took in his arms the infant Jesus, and pronounced

ced him *to be a light to lighten the Gentiles,* as well as *the glory of Israel.* Luke ii. 32. But above all our Saviour himself, who assumed with his usual humility the title and character of a shepherd, tells his disciples, that he should superintend, not merely them, and those of their nation, but another flock, which demanded his care. *Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall bear my voice: and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.* John x. 16.

The second Difficulty.

We now come to a second obstacle, which nothing but the interposition of the Deity could remove. This arose from the wrong notions, which the apostles and disciples of Christ had entertained of his kingdom, and their national abhorrence of other people. They had the testimony of the prophets to enlighten their minds, and they had heard the words of their master; who told them, that he should have *another fold.* But their prejudices were strong, and hereditary :

ditary : and however express the declaration, they could not conceive it to be true. Nothing but the divine influence could wean them of their prepossession. At last it pleased God to admonish Peter in a vision ; and to inform him, that the bar was now to be taken away : and that he was to call nothing of itself unclean, and impure, which God had created : and, consequently, he was not to shew any abhorrence to people of other nations. Upon this the apostle made a visit under the direction of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius, a Roman centurion. And finding that this person had been favoured with a divine communication, Peter seemed to awake as out of a long sleep, and said—*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons : but in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* In consequence of this he baptized Cornelius, and his family, who had previously received the gift of the Holy Ghost : and he afterwards instructed the other apostles and disciples with the will and determination of God. But still they adhered to the rites of the Mosaic law,

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which were not compatible with Christianity. For they consisted for the most part of emblems and allusions, which related to Christ and his mediatorial office: and the type became idle and useless, when the thing signified was arrived. Upon this it pleased God to raise Paul of Tarsus, a very extraordinary man, who, through a false zeal, had been a grievous persecutor of the Christians. But, by a miraculous conversion, he became a strong pillar of the church; and the principal apostle of the Gentiles. He insisted upon the inutility of the former law: which was inconsistent with the gospel of Christ, which was stiled the law of the New Testament. Saint Peter, at last, co-operated with him: and they confirmed the other disciples. Upon this they all began to betake themselves into various regions of the earth; teaching, and baptizing: and thousands and ten thousands were made proselytes to the gospel. The prejudices and difficulties, which I have here mentioned, could not have been removed by human means. We perceive the power of God through the whole operation.

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The third Difficulty.

We see now the apostles freed from that false bias, by which they and their fathers before them had been carried aside: and going over the world with vast labour, and preaching the gospel of Christ. Their success was wonderful, but from whence did it proceed? They had, it is true, got over their own prejudices: but had not the nations, whom they were to convert, the like, or greater? What was Christ crucified to the people of Pontus and Asia: to those of Colchis and Iberia: to the Celt and Scythian? Who freed their minds from their national established worship; and disposed their hard hearts to the reception of the gospel? Even He, who softened *the flinty rock*, and *made rivers to run in dry places*: who gave *manna in the desert*: and fed his people *with the bread of heaven*. To Him, and Him only, can the great change be attributed: for human power, unassisted, could never have prevailed. The apostles left to themselves would not have gained a single Samaritan: of this we may judge from the few proselytes made at this day.

The last Difficulty.

The last words of our Saviour to his disciples after his resurrection contained an order for them to make his gospel manifest to the whole world. *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Matt. xxviii. 19. And in another place he tells them, *that repentance, and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem: and ye are witnesses of these things.* Luke xxiv. 47. The difficulty, which occurs here, I have in some degree anticipated: and it is otherwise very obvious. For how could these men of Galilee gain a sufficient knowledge in such a variety of languages, as was sufficient for this work? A superficial insight could by no means be adequate to the purpose. There must have been in the teachers an aptness, copiousness, and fluency, to preach with any effect; and to captivate the hearts of the hearers. But how was this possible to be obtained in so many

many different and numerous tongues, between many of which there could be no similitude nor analogy? With man it was not possible, however necessary. Therefore it pleased God to afford the disciples a miraculous gift of tongues, without which they could never have propagated the gospel. This was effected in a wonderful manner by an effusion of the Holy Ghost at the feast of Pentecost; when there were assembled at Jerusalem devout men from all parts of the world. Every one of these heard their own language to their great astonishment spoken by the apostles and disciples. *Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Lydia*, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene; and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.* Acts ii. 9, &c. These languages are numerous, yet they were not sufficient to carry on the

* So I read, instead of Judea.

great work in the regions, to which it was extended *. For, as I have before observed, we have authority to believe, that some of the disciples lived to see the knowledge of the gospel carried beyond the limits of the Roman empire. The apostles therefore were certainly gifted with tongues, wherever they came. The history proves the miracle. *We are assured, says the learned Mosheim, by the most unexceptionable testimonies, that Christ was worshipped, as God, almost throughout the whole East; as also among the Germans, Spaniards, Celts, Britons, and many other nations. But which of them received the gospel in the first century, and which in the second, is a question not to be answered at this distance of time †.* That the name of Christ was known, and his religion thus far propagated, may be in great measure proved from the churches founded in Antioch, and in Assyria; in Samaria, Alexandria, Carthage, and as far as Vienne

* Such as Colchis, Iberia, many parts of Africa, Iberia Hispanica, Lusitania, Gaul, and, if we may trust to Venerable Bede, as far as Britain.

† Ecclesiastical History, Vol. i. p. 72.

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and Lyons in Gaul. In the intermediate space, such as Italy, Greece, and, what is now called, Asia Minor, they were very numerous even in the time of St. Paul. The writers too were in great number : such as Justin of Syria Palestina ; Irenæus of Lyons ; Polycarp of Smyrna ; Athenagoras of Athens ; Theophilus of Antioch ; Tertullian of Africa ; and Tatian of Assyria ; with several others in the second century, who shew how far the gospel had reached by the countries, from whence they wrote. Pliny was born in the time of the apostles ; and in the reign of Trajan had the province of Bithynia : and he speaks of the Christians being there so numerous ; that in some places the meat could not be sold in the shambles, because it had been offered to idols. The Christians would not buy it ; and there were not others sufficient to purchase.

The Prospects afforded to the first Proselytes.

Let us consider what encouragement was offered to the first converts, when they

were to embrace Christianity. After a total renunciation of the Gods of their fathers, and many worldly gratifications, to which they had been accustomed, they were invited to take up the cross of Christ; and to undergo pains, and penalties; shame, exile, and death itself for the sake of the gospel. They however were won over by the beauty of holiness, and the sanctity and reasonableness of the word of God: and in consequence of it underwent the most grievous persecutions, as the Gentile writers witness: and as we also are more fully informed by those of the church. Hence Athenagoras, in his excellent apology to the Emperors Marcus Antoninus and Commodus, mentions how duly justice was administered to all other people: but if a Christian was accused, there was no trial: no appeal. The name of Christian was often sufficient: and the word was—*to the beasts—to the lions*. Thus the poor victim, without any process, was hurried away to the savage monsters to be devoured. Ten, or more, grievous persecutions did the Christians suffer: and yet the word of God prevailed.

vailed. It may, I know, be said, that every sect, and schism, encreases by persecution. But it is an egregious mistake. Undue oppression, and severity, may sometimes inflame peoples minds; and controul beget opposition. But when persecution extends to acts of universal cruelty and massacre, human nature cannot stand it. Christianity was introduced into Japan: and the converts are by some writers said to have amounted to many myriads. The last remains, after they had seen the far greater part without mercy cut off, took shelter in the city Samabrava. But the Japanese, assisted with cannon by the Dutch, took the place, and put them all to the sword. Ask now, what is become of Christianity in Japan? It is totally extinct. And by what means? By persecution. Cast an eye upon Spain, where the Protestant religion, like a salutary plant, began once to shew itself. How was it suppressed? By fire and faggot, administered by that horrid tribunal, called the Holy Office. By command of this unmerciful court three most excellent men, Cazala, Constantino, Ægidio,

dio, were burnt alive : and those, whoever they might be, that favoured their opinion, were too much terrified to proceed in their path. What then ruined the Reformation in Spain? Persecution. A tree may be pruned, and lopped, and sprout out more luxuriantly. But when ruined to the root, it will never, without a miracle, produce either fruit or flower.

Of the Progress of the Gospel in opposition to all Difficulties.

Such were the difficulties which Christianity encountered at the time of its first propagation. They were different, as I have shewn : and under none of them could religion have been supported by any human power. Yet we have seen from the most unexceptionable authorities, and clearest evidence, that even in the apostolic age it had been planted in regions widely separated ; and, as there is reason to think, beyond the limits of the Roman empire. In these regions the apostles preached the gospel to people, who varied in manners, worship,

ship, and language: and they succeeded. The evidence for this quick and extensive propagation of the Gospel is so strong, that, unless we set aside all history, it must be admitted: and we know, that it could not have been effected, without the interposition of the Deity, and the gift of tongues. I therefore repeat, what I have before said, that the history proves the truth of the miracle: and we may be assured that the religion of the gospel is of divine original.

III.

OF OUR SAVIOUR, AND THE
PROPHECIES RELATING
TO HIS COMING.

*Concerning the Series of Prophecies, which
related to Christ, the Messiah.*

AS the prophecies above mentioned were too remote and extraordinary for any human foresight to have conceived: so those concerning our Saviour will be found equally remarkable, and contrary to all human apprehension: which however were wonderfully compleated. They are very numerous, and all tend manifestly to that great object, to which they are justly supposed to have been directed. And as they were given at different times, I will mention some of those, which are most pertinent,

ment, and remarkable, in the order in which they occur. And here it is to be observed that the more remote the era, the more dark and mysterious the prophecy will at first appear. But new light will accrue continually : and all these oracular intimations will receive reciprocal illustration ; till they are at last confirmed by the event. Nor let the infidel here surmise ; that the nearer people approached to this event, the more room was afforded for conjecture : for the latest of these prophecies was some centuries antecedent to the completion. Nor could any person, who lived but five years before the birth of Christ, have formed the least notion of those great occurrences, which ensued upon his coming into life.

Of the most early Prophetic Declaration.

The first prophecy, which alludes to Christ, and the blessings to accrue from him, is almost as early, as the creation of man. God, who by the excellence of his knowledge foresaw the fall of Adam, and
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the evil, which would necessarily ensue, appointed a remedy for that evil, and an atonement to be effected in good season, *by the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* At the same time therefore, that the Deity denounces death upon Adam for his offence, he affords him gracious intimation of his future pardon, and that all, that was lost by him, would be repaired by a deliverer to come. In consequence of this the death, which was denounced upon him, would not be eternal, but be followed with a renewal of life; which was to be effected by that person, who was to *bruise the head of the serpent*: and render all his purposes abortive. The Deity accordingly says to the Deceiver—*I will put enmity between thee and the woman: it (the seed of the woman) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* Genesis iii. 15. We find, that the person to come is not mentioned as to be born of the sons of men; but his birth is confined to the woman, and called her seed: and whenever he appeared, he was to crush the serpent's head, that is ruin him intirely. On the other hand,

hand, the malice of the serpent is represented allegorically, as only bruising, or hurting, the heel: by which is signified an insidious, and ineffectual attack upon the unwary passenger, during his pilgrimage upon earth. This victory over the grand deceiver is mentioned by the prophet Isaiah, when he speaks of the coming of Christ.—*In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword, shall punish Leviathan, the piercing serpent: even Leviathan, that crooked serpent.* Isaiah xxvii. 1. This victory is described in the Apocalypse, where it is said, that *an angel came down from heaven, and laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan.—And the devil, that deceived them was cast into a lake of fire and brimstone.* Revelations xx. 1, 2, and 10.

Notwithstanding these happy circumstances which were to accrue from the seed of the woman, yet it pleased God to pass judgment upon Adam for his offence.—*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground: for out of it wast thou taken. For dust thou art: and*
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unto dust shalt thou return. Genesis iii. 19. This was a solemn and fearful denunciation, yet attended with gleams of comfort: as there was intimation in the foregoing part, that the machinations of the great enemy would be abortive; and consequently that this death would not be forever: Adam understood it in this sense, as did his posterity: who speak of this life as a state of pilgrimage; during which they were proceeding to a better habitation. Adam accordingly, though he had just received this sentence, gave a name to his wife, which indicated his future expectations.—*And Adam called his wife's name Eve (or life) because she was the mother (not of all living, but) of all life.* Genesis iii. 20. This appellation was emphatically given, because from a virgin daughter of Eve the *Lord of life* was to be born, the same, who said of himself—*I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* And to shew his miraculous power, and to give full evidence of the truth, which he advanced, he raised Lazarus from the grave. John xi.

44.—*In him was life, and the life was the light of men. John i. 4.—For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.—For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.*

From the history given of the first man Adam, however mysterious it may in some parts appear, we learn for certain, that there was an act of disobedience, and a punishment in consequence of it. But that punishment was alleviated, and a promise given, that all that had been forfeited by one man, should be retrieved by another, styled in aftertimes *the Lord of life*. This person was to be of the seed of the woman, and was to crush the head of the serpent, and to restore life and immortality to the world. In consequence of this the woman was called Eva, or *life*: because through her this blessing was to be ultimately derived. Our Saviour accordingly in the fulness of time came into the world, and was born of a virgin: and in him was fulfilled, all that had been intimated in this ancient prophecy.

The Prophecy which came by Abrahah.

The next promise made to man is, that, which was given to the Patriarch Abraham, when, in obedience to God's command, he had made an offer of his only son for a sacrifice. This promise is more determinate than the former; for by that we were informed in general, that a Saviour would come into the world. But we are now told the particular family; and that he was to be from a descendant of Abraham. The angel of the Lord accordingly called to him out of heaven, *and said: By my self have I sworn, saith the Lord; for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven; and as the sand which is upon the sea shore:—and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: because thou hast obeyed my voice.* Gen. xxii. 16, 17, 18. From hence we farther learn, that not only the posterity of the Patriarch was to enjoy the benefit, which

which was one day to accrue : but all nations were to participate in the blessing. This affords intelligence of great consequence.

The Prophecy by the Patriarch Jacob.

The next prophetic promise is given by the Patriarch Jacob, to his twelve sons, just before his death. In his address to Judah, he mentions how respectable his tribe would prove ; and how superior to those of his brethren : which we know was fully verified. He then proceeds to disclose some future events of great importance, which are comprised within a small compass.—*The scepter shall not depart from Judah : nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come : and unto him shall be the gathering of the people, or nations.* Gen. xlix. 10. There are different versions and expositions of this portion of scripture : but the text of the original is that, to which we must principally attend. There are three things of great consequence mentioned : of which the first is, that the scepter,

ter, or royalty, shall not fail in this respectable tribe, till Shiloh, the Messiah, shall come. Secondly, that a lawgiver, or rather, as most very properly expresses it, an expounder of the law shall not fail; consequently the law itself shall be in force; till the time of that divine person's appearance. Lastly, to him shall be the gathering, or union of the Gentiles. Some interpret the words by saying—he will be *the expectation*, or *the desire*, of the Gentiles: which makes little difference in the purport.

Concerning the Scepter, which was to depart from Israel.

In respect to the first article, people vary very much about the time, when *the scepter departed from Judah*; though both Jews and Christians allow, that by Shiloh was signified the Messiah. Some, says the learned Joseph Mede, *will have it to have been, when Pompey first brought the Jewish state under the Roman subjection.—Others, when Herod, an Idumæan stranger, was by*
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the Romans invested to be their king.—Others, not till the destruction of the Jewish state by Titus. This last was the author's opinion: for then, he says, was the *calling of the Gentiles*: in which he was greatly mistaken. J. Mede's works, vol. i. c. 8. These surmises are all equally ill founded: and tend to ruin a prophecy of great consequence, which with a proper attention will be found very precise and clear. They have imagined, that the scepter mentioned related to the temporal rule of Judea, either as a kingdom, or commonwealth. But the temporal government was varied, interrupted, alienated, and at one time, for seventy years, totally ruined: so that the scepter in this sense had often departed; consequently this interpretation is quite foreign to the purport of the prophecy. They did not consider, that the polity of the Jewish nation was a sacred institution, and the government a theocracy: which was never interrupted, nor did it ever cease, till the rejection of the Messiah prince. Hence we read, that *the Lord came from Sinai.—The Lord was king in Jeshurun.*

Deut. xxxiii. 2, 5.—*Sing praises to our king.*
 Pf. xlvii. 6.—*The holy one of Israel is our king.* Pf. lxxxix. 18.—*Let Israel rejoice in him, that made him—let the children of Zion be joyful in their king.* Pf. cxlix. 2.—In consequence of this the children of Israel were said to be—a chosen people, a peculiar people, and the Lord's portion. *The Lord hath chosen thee a special people.* Deut. vii. 6.—*Ye shall be unto me, saith the Lord, a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.* Exod. xix. 6. Many other instances might be produced, by which the theocracy is manifestly ascertained. Hence the people remained under this peculiar state of government for above six hundred years from the death of the Patriarch, by whom the prophecy was given. But in the days of Samuel they impiously demanded a temporal king, that they might be governed after the manner of other nations. This prophet, who had acted as God's substitute both as a priest, and a judge, was greatly affected at their setting him aside, after he had acted by them so uprightly. It however pleased God to indulge them in their wish ;

wish : *And the Lord said unto Samuel, hearken to the voice of the people in all, that they say unto thee. For they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.* 1 Sam. viii. 7.

We find here manifestly, that God was their king ; and that this indignity was offered to his rule and governance. But though he granted their request, and from a republic they became a monarchy, yet God still presided over his church and over the nation ; *the Lord was king in Zion* : and the princes of Judah were only his substitutes, and his anointed. Hence David, when he addresses Him, styles Him—*My King, and my God.* Pf. v. 2.

This was the scepter, which departed from Judah, when Shiloh, the Messiah, came : at the same time the expounder of the law, and the law itself, ceased : and the gathering of the Gentiles succeeded. In consequence of this theocracy our Saviour, while he lived, always spoke of himself as a sovereign, and a king above all. The accusation of the Jews was, that he said, *he himself is Christ, the king.* Luke

xxiii. 2. And when Pilate asked him, *Art thou the king of the Jews?* he acknowledged the truth; though it was at the hazard of his life. Ver. 3. This he repeatedly maintained. At the time, when the Roman magistrate brought him forth before the people, it was the preparation of the passover, when they resorted from all parts of Judea to Jerusalem. The high-priest, and all of the priesthood, and the principal persons of the Jewish nation, and the whole nation in a manner, were present.—*And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he (Pilate) saith unto the Jews, BEHOLD YOUR KING. But they cried out, Away with him; away with him: crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered—We have no king, but Cæsar.* John xix. 14, 15. We are here brought to the crisis. This was the very point of time, when the scepter departed: when the theocracy ceased: when the whole body of the Jewish nation rejected the Messiah prince, and God their governor: when they allowed no one else, but an heathen monarch to

to be their king. *Then Judah forsook God, which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.* Deut. xxxii. 15. The apostate nation was now alienated from the Deity; and no longer a peculiar and chosen people. The scepter from which they revolted, departed from them: their law was abrogated; and a better, and a more rational, dispensation took place: and the Gentiles were invited to all the privileges of the gospel. This last event happened about three years exclusive from the death of Christ. At this time St. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, was miraculously converted from Judaism: and Cornelius, the Roman centurion, with his family, was admitted into the bosom of the church; these led the way to others without number in every region; who soon attained to the same spiritual advantages. Hence it was truly said of the apostles—*Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.* Romans x. 18.

Thus has this very ancient prophecy been fulfilled in every part. And in the texture of this oracle there cannot have been

been any fraud : for, as I have before observed, the Jews, who are enemies to Christianity, have been constantly in possession of the original history. Add to this, that all of their race of old understood the prophecy to relate to Christ, and his coming. This is evident from their ancient paraphrases, which they stile Targums *. In these the passage is universally made to refer to the *Messiah King* ; whom however through their blindness they knew not.—Hence they have preserved evidence in opposition to themselves ; and truth to their own confusion.

The Prophecy concerning Christ by Moses.

The next prophecy is that of Moses, who tells the children of Israel, *the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet like*

* That the ancient Jews so understood it, appears by all the three Targums, or Chaldee Paraphrasts. The Targum called of Jerusalem renders expressly—*Until the time when king Messiah shall come—&c.* Onkelos, *Until Messiah comes, whose is the kingdom.* Likewise in their Talmud, Shiloh is among *the names of the Messiah.* See J. Mede's eighth Discourse, Vol. i, P. 47.

unto me ; unto him ye shall hearken. Deut. xviii. 15. I have shewn, that no person ever arose like to Moses either as a law-giver, or a prophet, nor as a conductor of a people, nor as a worker of miracles. Nor had any one such an intimate intercourse with the Deity, excepting Christ our Saviour. He was like Moses : but far superior in every article. Therefore to him only did Moses allude.

Prophecies from the later Prophets.

We have seen by a regular process, that the great Saviour, and restorer, of mankind, was to be of the seed of the woman ; of the family of Abraham ; and lastly of the tribe of Judah. We shall find, as we go on, that the prophecies will be still more particular ; and will point out the place of his birth, and of his residence : and also of many the most material circumstances of his life. From the evidence, which is to ensue, we shall be farther informed, that he was to be of the lineage of David, the son of Jesse. This we learn from Isaiah ; who in a beautiful allegory describes the
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mildness of his rule, and the happy tendency of his religion, towards the softening of the obdurate heart; and the establishing of peace and charity, to which the fierceness and cruelty of man was to give way. *And there shall come forth a rod (or scepter) out of the stem of Jesse: and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding.—With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth.—The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.—And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp: and the weaned child shall put his hand upon the cockatrice den, &c.—And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse; which shall stand for an ensign to the people. To it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. Ch. xi. 1, &c. &c.—Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch; and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. Jerem. xxiii. 5.*
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—The place of his nativity was plainly marked out many centuries before his birth. *But thou, Bethlehem Ephrath, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.* Micah v. 2. This can be applicable to no one but Christ. The nature of his office, and purport of his mission are also described: and his character in general given by the prophet Isaiah in a most affecting manner. *Who hath believed our report: and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him, as a tender plant: and as a root out of a dry ground. He hath neither form nor comeliness: and when we shall see him there is no beauty, that we should desire him. He is despised, and rejected of men: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him. He was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions: he was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement*

tisement of our peace was upon him : and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray : we have turned every one to his own way : and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted : yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter ; and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so openeth he not his mouth. He was taken from prison, and from judgment : and who shall declare his generation ? For he was cut off out of the land of the living : for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked : and with the rich in his death : because he had done no violence : neither was any deceit in his mouth. More is added by the prophet, who at last concludes with saying—He was numbered with the transgressors : and he bare the sin of many : and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah LIII. Whoever is the least acquainted with the life of our Saviour in the gospel, must see, how particularly applicable this is to him in every article : nor is there any other person upon record, to whom it can possibly relate. The same prophet

prophet in another place has given us an account of the promulgation of a new law by Christ, and of its introduction among the nations of the earth. *It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains; and shall be exalted above the bills: and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways; and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law; and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations; and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not rise against nation: neither shall they learn war any more.* Isaiah ii. 2, &c.—Such was the tendency of the law of Christ, to which the nations acceded. It breathes nothing but love, and charity, and universal forgiveness. And such will be the happy effects, when the prophecy shall be fully compleated; and the kingdom of Christ universally established,

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blished. New light seems to be continually pouring in, and we make visible advances daily.

We have seen, that according to the most early prophecy, our Saviour was to be born of the seed of the woman without any earthly father. This is repeated by Isaiah, who mentions, that he should be born of a virgin. The manner in which this prophecy is introduced, and the circumstances with which it is connected, have caused some difficulties to the expositors. To these I shall at present say nothing: but take it, as it stands; independent of every other article. For it is a prophecy of great consequence; and quoted by the Evangelist, who well knew its consequence. *Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel: which being interpreted, is God with us.* Matthew i. 23. borrowed from Isaiah vii. 14. This is not applicable to any of the sons of men, but to Christ only. In consequence of this the angel, that appeared to the virgin, unfolded to her this great truth—*Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God.*

God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb; and bring forth a son; and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great; and shall be called the son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Luke i. 30, &c.

It has been observed, that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem Judah; as the prophet above-mentioned declared. But not only the place of his birth, but also of his chief residence is pointed out. Isaiah had been speaking of the distresses which were to be undergone by the people of Israel in the extreme parts of that kingdom, when they should be invaded by the Assyrian. This is in the beginning of the eighth chapter; which concludes with this melancholy prospect—*Lo! distress, and darkness; gloom, tribulation, and accumulated darkness.* The prophet then by a noble apostrophe betakes himself to future times, and describes the change, that will be experienced in a different era. In my quotation I shall follow for the most part the version of the

learned bishop Lowth, as corrected from the best manuscripts. *But there shall not hereafter be darkness in the land, which was distressed. In the former time he debased the land of Zebulon, and the land Naphtali. But in the latter time he made it glorious : even the way of the sea, beyond Jordan ; Galilee of the nations. The people, who walked in darkness, have seen a great light : they that dwelled in the land of the shadow of death, unto them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation : thou hast increased their joy : they rejoice before thee, as with the joy of harvest : as they rejoice, who divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burthen, the staff laid on his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, hast thou broken, as in the day of Midian.* He then mentions, that war was to cease, and the implements of war to be abolished : as an era of peace was to ensue, when the Messiah was to be born. *For the greaves of the armed warrior in the battle, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be for a burning, even fuel for the fire.* He then gives a reason for it ; and describes the Prince of Peace, who was to come.—*For unto us a child*

*child is born: unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called—Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace**. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to fix it and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, henceforth and for ever. The zeal of Jehovah, God of Hosts will do this. Isaiah viii. 22. and ix. 1, &c.—At the time of our Saviour's coming there was an era of peace, such as the world had not been witness to for ages. The temple of Janus at Rome was shut: the implements of battle were laid aside: and all warlike habiliments for a time out of use: so that the prophecy in this acceptation was wonderfully compleated.

The Certainty of these Prophecies asserted.

Other prophecies might be produced to the same purpose: but these, I believe, will be sufficient. They were afforded, as

* See Lowth's Comment upon Isaiah, p. 22. and notes P. 74.

we have seen, at different periods, from the most early times : and by them the miraculous birth of Christ, the place of his birth, and the time of peace, in which he was born, together with his family, and descent, are plainly pointed out. The purport also of his mission, his office as mediator, his expiation for sin, his divine nature, and exalted character, are foretold. The introduction likewise of a new law, the rejection of the Jewish nation, and the calling of the Gentiles, are repeatedly mentioned : all which we know to have been precisely fulfilled. A person must be not only slow of heart, but hardened to the last degree, who can resist such evidence. The only way, for an infidel to evade it, is to assert, that the whole was a forgery, and an interpolation. But who could forge these passages ? Or introduce them, where they are now found ? The only persons, who had a true knowledge of the sacred writings, were the Christians, and the Jews. Now at the time, when the apostles lived, the scriptures were in the hands of the latter, who had synagogues in every city, and town

town of consequence ; where the law, and the prophets, were every sabbath read and expounded. The Jews are said in these times to have been particularly scrupulous about the conservation of the sacred books ; so that they would not suffer an iöta to be added, or omitted. How then could any Christian have introduced a single word without immediate detection ? Besides the evangelists quote from the Greek version, which was in the hands of all the Hellenistick Jews ; for whose use the version had been made near four hundred years before the promulgation of the gospel. If then there be a charge of falsifying, it must fall upon the Jews, who had the original scriptures in their possession. But how could they in any antecedent age, without divine inspiration, foresee these great events, which were to come ? If these scriptures were inspired, as we know them to have been, all, that we contend for, is allowed ; and they are of divine original. Besides it is contrary to reason to imagine, that the Jews at any time would invent articles to their own infamy ; and which afforded such

strong attestation of their rejection and ruin. They providentially still exist, and are found very numerous in various parts of the world; and among the most enlightened nations. The sacred oracles remain in their hands: to which any body may appeal; and see, if they in any article of moment differ from those, which are in use among the Christians. In short, the Jews have been providentially made living witnesses to the truth of the holy scriptures. They prove to a demonstration, that no fraud could possibly have taken place.

Of the Birth of our Saviour: and his Residence at Nazareth.

In conformity with these prophecies our blessed Saviour was born in Bethlehem of Judea; and at a most propitious season in the reign of Augustus Cæsar; when there was peace over the whole Roman empire. This peace continued with very little interruption during the course of that prince's reign: which afforded a favourable opportunity for promoting the great scheme of
 Providence

Providence now in hand. This was the time, of which it was said, that *nation should not rise up against nation: when the law was to come from Zion: and they were to beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.* See Micah iv. 3. Our Saviour likewise, as it had been foretold, was born of a virgin, and of the house and lineage of David. We are informed, that his mother had been betrothed to Joseph: but before she was received by him as his wife, she was found with child by the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her (affianced) husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that, which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.—Then Joseph being raised from his sleep, did, as the angel of the Lord had bidden him. Matt. i. 19, &c.

After this was the slaughter of all the children at Bethlehem and its neighbourhood, which were two years old and under. The order for this slaughter of the innocents came from the tyrant Herod, who imagined that among those slain the child Jesus would certainly be included. But Joseph had been previously admonished in another dream to flee into Egypt, and there to remain with the child and its mother, till Herod was dead. There is something very remarkable in these histories, which, seems to have been overlooked. Had the angel appeared to Joseph any otherwise, than in a dream : had he come, in a human shape ; or had a prophet been sent with the message, and ordered him—*to take unto him his betrothed wife* ; some infidel would have said, it was an illusion, and fraud : that Joseph was deceived by a false appearance : and the miraculous birth of our Saviour would have been called in question, or denied. But as the intimation was given by a dream, it must have been attended with uncommon energy ; and have made a most powerful impression. The
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law of Moses was very severe against those, who had forfeited their virginity : and the Jewish nation were particularly scrupulous upon this head : nor would any man take to him a young woman for a wife, who had given up this prerogative. I say then, that these dreams of Joseph must have been attended with the most forcible conviction, which made him take to himself a virgin, who in appearance was not a virgin ; to adopt her son for his own ; to shelter, and preserve him in danger ; and to fly with them both into a foreign country, to the detriment of his occupation, and at the hazard of his life. Nothing but the hand of God could have effected this.

Concerning our Saviour's History antecedent to his Ministry.

Upon the death of Herod the holy family returned from Egypt ; and dwelt at Nazareth in Galilee, called Galilee of the Gentiles. For it consisted of a mixed race of people ; and was held in little estimation by the people of Judea. Every thing relating

lating to our Saviour's birth and parentage tended to inspire humility. He was the reputed son of a mechanick; born in a stable; nursed in a manger; saluted by shepherds; and he was brought up in an obscure city of Zebulon, among the outcasts of Israel. This was certainly appointed for wise ends; that he might live unknown, and unmolested, to the time of his manifesting himself to the world.

Between this state of our Saviour's infancy and the time of his ministry an interval is observable, in which little is said concerning him. Yet that little affords matter of much moment; and leads us to anticipate all that excellence, which afterwards ensued. For it is said, that *the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit: filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.* And in another place we are told—*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature: and in favour with God and man.* Luke ii. 40, and 52. Another instance of the promising disposition of our Saviour is afforded by the same evangelist, who mentions, that he attended his parents, when he was about twelve

twelve years old, to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover; and that he was for some time missed by them. *And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors; both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding, and answers.* Ver. 46, 47. We find even at this age his native modesty, and humility, prevailing. He did not, with all his wisdom, presume to teach: but was *bearing* and *inquiring*: and giving an answer, when it was required of him. Yet such was his understanding, that *he might have informed princes, and taught senators wisdom.*

When he was about the age of thirty years, after having been baptized by John, he entered upon his ministry; and shewed that he had a divine mission by the surprising miracles, which he wrought. This grand display was first made in the region near Nazareth, where he resided. Matt. iv. 23. Then was that fulfilled, which had been foretold by Isaiah, of *the land of Zebulon, and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the*
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the sea—Galilee of nations. The people, who walked in darkness, have seen a great light : they, that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them bath the light shined.—For unto us a child is born ; unto us a son is given, &c. Isaiah ix. 1, 2, 3, &c.

Concerning his first Display of Miracles.

In this part of the world our Saviour first exhibited his miraculous powers : and afterwards displayed them in other places of Judea, and in Jerusalem itself. But the elders of the people, and those of the priesthood, and the people of Judea in general, were ever hostile towards him. When he had healed a man upon the sabbath-day, to which St. John alludes in his seventh chapter, the Jews were ready to kill him. Upon his expostulating with them, many of the people were greatly affected, and *said, Of a truth this is the prophet. Others said, This is the Christ ; but some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee ?* And when one of their rulers ventured to speak in his favour, the answer was, *Art thou also of Galilee ?*

like? Search and look : for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. This one circumstance set aside all the superlative goodness of Christ. All his virtues and all his miraculous powers, which he continually exerted for the good of others, were rejected and despised. Nay, they were attributed to the devil ; and to *Beelzebub, the prince of the devils* : and all this because Christ was a reputed Galilean. Such is the force of prejudice : which though founded in fancy, is often the last, and the most difficult, obstacle in the way of truth.

Of the subsequent Part of his Life : and of his Miracles.

The time, when our Saviour entered upon his ministry, was, when he had attained to his thirtieth year of age. This was in conformity to the law of Moses, mentioned in Numbers iv. 47, &c. to which, while he lived, he held himself obedient. In this ministry he persevered for three years and an half, when he was cut off by the unbelieving Jews. His miracles were for the most part exhibited
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in Galilee, and in its vicinity : that he might not too early excite the jealousy of the priests and princes at Jerusalem ; and be brought into trouble before his time. He therefore enjoins some of those, upon whom he had performed miraculous cures, to be silent concerning these operations ; and only to make those offerings, appointed by the law. But though the Jews sought his life ; and he was told of the evil designs of Herod Antipas, yet he never failed to go up to Jerusalem at the appointed feasts. At other times, as I have mentioned, he preached the Gospel near Nazareth and the neighbouring cities. Hither the people in multitudes followed him, who were captivated with the excellence of his doctrines, as well as astonished at his miracles. *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria : and they brought unto him all sick people, that were taken with divers diseases, and torments ; and those, which*

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were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy, and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from beyond Jordan. And from Idumea, and those about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard what great things he did, came unto him. Matt. iv. 23. Mark iii. 7. We find, that these supernatural operations were performed in the blaze of day, and before a multitude of witnesses, at all times. This prepared the people for the reception of the gospel, when it was afterwards preached by the apostles. And to this was in great measure owing that rapid progress it for a time made among the Jews : who were otherwise so-attached to the religion of their fathers, and the law of Moses. The discourses of our Saviour were very sublime, and delivered with great dignity : yet they were attended with such grace and goodness, expressed with such plainness, and illustrated often with such apposite and pleasing analogy, that they captivated all, who heard them. So desirous

desirous were the people of this spiritual food, that they sometimes forgot the requisites for the body: and there are two instances, when many of them would have fainted with hunger, had they not been relieved by the miracle of the loaves and fishes. In these miracles we shall never find an unmeaning process, and a mere arbitrary display of power. On the contrary, they were always significant and rational: and there was a due call for the operation. They likewise proceeded from consummate benevolence and compassion: and tended to the good both of the body and the soul. When he was going with his disciples to a city called Nain, not far from Capernaum, it is said that he was attended with much people. *And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold there was a dead man carried out.* But people die daily: what reason was here for any divine interposition? Upon further inquiry we shall find, there was a just cause both for compassion, and assistance. For the deceased appears to have been a young man, unexpectedly taken off: add to this—
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he was an only son of his mother : and this mother a widow. And we may judge of her worth, and the character of the deceased, from the numbers, that followed her to pay their last regard at the funeral. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion upon her ; and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier ; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak : and he delivered him to his mother. And the rumour of him (Christ Jesus) went forth (not only in Galilee : but) throughout all Judea : and the region round about. Luke vii. 11, &c.

We find here sufficient reason for the compassion of Christ to be moved ; and his heavenly powers exerted ; as the distress of an excellent but unhappy mother was relieved : and the whole tended to the glory of God ; to which such numbers bore witness.

Of the Centurion's Servant healed.

There is a preceding miracle in the same part of St. Luke's gospel, which was performed

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turned upon the Centurion's servant, whom
 our Saviour healed of his infirmity. In all
 these histories there is a great deal con-
 tained in a small space : and they abound
 with many hidden truths, which demand
 proper attention to be brought to light.
 When Christ was at Capernaum, *a certain*
Centurion's servant, who was dear unto him,
was sick, and ready to die. And when he
 (the Centurion) heard of Jesus, he sent to
 him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him
 that he would come, and heal his servant.
 And when they came to Jesus, they besought
 him *importunately*, saying, that he was worthy, for
 whom he should do this. For he loveth our
 nation : and he hath built us a synagogue.
 Here again we have another rational in-
 ducement for our Saviour to exert his be-
 nevolence and power. For the Centurion
 was evidently a proselyte, a worshipper
 of the true God : and at the same
 time he possessed a strong faith in Christ,
 to whose assistance he looked up. The
 Jews too who besought in his behalf,
 had the like faith, as appears by their
 importunity. This was always a necessary
 article

article towards obtaining the divine interposition. Our Saviour accordingly went with the elders in order to perform this salutary office. *But when he was not far from the house, the Centurion sent friends to him, saying—Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy, that thou shouldst enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word; and my servant shall be healed. And yet I am a man, who have authority and command* conferred upon me, having soldiers under me: and I say to one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.* Here we find strong faith and a suitable humility; with great reverence towards the person addressed: and all this from one much esteemed, and of rank in the part of the world, where he resided. Our Saviour accordingly granted his request, and healed his servant at a word: and turning to his disciples and the people, who followed him,

* This certainly was meant by the Centurion, when he delivered his sentiments. The context proves it.

shewed his approbation of the Centurion's behaviour. *I say unto you, I have not found so great faith: no, not in Israel.* Luke vii. 2, 3, 4, &c.

We have a great many of Christ's miracles recorded: but there were far more performed, as we may learn from the evangelists. For when John the Baptist sent his disciples, on account of their diffidence, to know of Christ, whether he was the Messiah, or not; it is said, *in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits: and unto many that were blind, he gave sight.* By this he intimated, what he, at another time, declared more plainly—if you believe not me, yet believe my works: for they plainly testify who I am.

*Concerning the raising of Lazarus from
the dead.*

Out of these miracles recorded I shall mention one more; which is described very minutely and circumstantially by St. John, as abounding with matter well worthy of our consideration. It relates to a
person

person named Lazarus, to whom as well as to his sisters our Saviour shewed great regard on account of their faith and goodness. He died at Bethany, a place, which was little more than two miles from Jerusalem. It was the purpose of Christ to raise him from the dead; and to make his recovery a prelude to his own resurrection, which was to happen very soon. From hence people might know, that by the same power, by which he raised up Lazarus, he could raise himself; and ultimately raise all mankind at the last day. And as the scene of action was to be near the great city, Jerusalem, the miracle would be a matter of notoriety, to which numbers would be eye-witnesses. This circumstance would diminish many doubts and scruples, when he should in a very short time rise himself from the dead, and dispose many persons to accede to the gospel. Jesus had told his disciples, that Lazarus was sick, and afterwards mentioned more plainly, that he *was dead*. He seems to have been at this time at a distance, and probably near Enon and Bethabara,

where John formerly had baptized. When therefore he came to Bethany, Lazarus had been dead four days, and after such an interval in a state of putrefaction. Just as he was arrived, Martha, one of the sisters, met him full of grief, and said, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now whatever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.* Jesus said, *Thy brother shall rise again.* Martha said unto him, *I know, that he shall rise again at the resurrection, at the last day.* Jesus said unto her, *I am the resurrection, and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* Notwithstanding this he could not wean his best friends of their prejudices ; nor induce them to place a sure trust in his divine power. Though he was grieved at their hardness of heart ; yet when he saw the two sisters in tears, and the Jews also that were with them in tears, he was greatly affected, and wept himself. He at last came to the tomb, which was a cave, with a stone over it : and he ordered the stone to be removed. Martha still unbelieving, intimated, that
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the removal would be to no purpose ; as her brother was now in a state of putrefaction : for he had *been dead four days*. By this we learn, that there could be no deceit in this case. It was no deliquium nor any epileptic disorder : for the body was not only dead, but, as they had reason to believe, in a state of corruption. Jesus was affected at this want of faith, and gave her a gentle rebuke, which compassion softened—*Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God ? Then they took away the stone, where the dead was laid*. Upon this our Saviour stopped awhile to offer up an awful address to Heaven, which must have raised the expectation, and increased the reverence of all, who beheld the operation. *And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou bearest me at all times : but because of the people, which stand by, I said it, that they may believe, that thou hast sent me*. We find, that the ultimate of this process was to give glory to God ; and to ascertain the divine commission of his son Christ

Jesus: also to confirm his disciples in their faith: and to open the eyes of others, that they might hereafter embrace the truth. *When, therefore, Christ had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.* The dead immediately heard his voice; and Lazarus came out of the tomb in his grave cloaths, and appeared to the astonished multitude. In consequence of this not only his disciples were more established in their faith; but many of the Jews, people of Jerusalem, when they *had seen the things, which Jesus did, believed on him.* And, as I before said, this miracle disposed the minds of people towards the belief of his own resurrection afterwards. For he, who could restore a person from a state of corruption, was able to raise himself, who *was not to see corruption.* Some of those, who had been present, returned to the city and disclosed, what had been done. *Then gathered the chief priests, and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doth many miracles.* See John xi. Hence we may perceive, that nobody entertained any doubt concerning the mighty works

works performed. Yet such was their perverseness, that *from that day they took counsel together to put him to death,—And the chief priests consulted, that they might put Lazarus also to death.* Chap. xii. 10.

The happy Consequences of these Miracles.

We find, what necessity there was for miracles, to get the better of this backwardness in some, and this hardness of heart in others. And we may farther perceive, what an excellent design, and what wisdom, appears in all these operations. First they were calculated for the immediate good of the person or persons, on whose account they were performed. Next for the honour of God, whose worship and reverence were by these means greatly enhanced. They likewise ascertained the divine mission of Christ, who, by his extraordinary powers shewed that he was the Messiah promised to the world. Lastly they disposed people to the reception of the gospel, when after his resurrection it was preached at Jerusalem, and in its vicinity. Hence

the progress of the gospel was even in this city wonderful: so that from the exhortation of Peter many were baptized; and in one day *there were added three thousand souls.* Acts ii. 41. In another place it is said; that *many of them, which heard the word believed: and the number of the men was about five thousand.* Acts iv. 4. It was in the midst of a persecution, when the apostles first began to preach the word. We are likewise told soon afterwards, that *the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly: and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.* Chap. vi. 7. This wonderful progress of the gospel could never have been effected but by the preaching and miracles of our Saviour antecedently; and to the effusion of the Holy Ghost afterwards, by which the apostles were gifted with the like divine powers.

The Criterion, or Test of Miracles.

It has been often asked, as there have been accounts of miracles in all ages, *how are we to distinguish between the true and the false? By what rule can we proceed in order to make a proper estimate?* Let the miracles of our Saviour be laid down for a rule, by which others may be measured, and see, if those others will abide that test. See, if there were a due call for the divine interposition: if the objects were worthy of that influence, which is afforded by the Holy Spirit. Did they tend to the good of the soul, as well as the health of the body: and were they attended with that internal evidence, with which those of our Saviour were accompanied*? And were they authenticated

* It is said, if I mistake not, in the life of Ignatius Loyola, the patron saint of the Jesuits, that he was importuned very much to play at billiards by a person, who was a proficient in the game. He excused himself for a time, as being quite ignorant, and not capable of playing. At last being continually solicited, he engaged with the other person, and put his ball into the hazard every stroke: so that he defeated him entirely. This has been mentioned as a miracle. But was there here any call for the divine interposition? Was the object

thenticated by such external evidence, as those in the Scriptures are known to have been : and had they multitudes, who witnessed to their truth? For, as the apostle says, of the operations of Christ, *These things were not done in a corner*. From hence we may obtain a criterion by which we may distinguish between truth, and falsehood; and not be misguided by any legendary fictions.

object worthy of the Holy Ghost? Was there any apparent necessity for the operation; or did it afford any mental or bodily advantage? Lastly, was it so attested, as to claim the least belief? No. All these requisites therefore being wanting we may easily pass judgment upon the credibility of the miracle: and give it up, with thousands from the same quarter, as an idle and unworthy fiction. See the life of Ignatius by Maffei.

Eunapius mentions, that Jamblichus the Chalcidian was a worker of miracles; of which he gives one instance. The philosopher was with several of his followers at Gadara in Coelosyria; where were some famous hot-baths. Here to show his magic art he put his hand into the water, and after having uttered a few words he called forth the two divinities of the waters. They came out at his command, and appeared like little children, and ran and hung upon his neck, and hugged him as if he were their father. After a little time they quitted him, and he ordered them back to their former place to the admiration of all who beheld him. Life of Jamb. p. 26. Let this be tried in the same manner, and see if it will abide the test. The miracles of the Abbé Paris are of the same class.

Farther

Farther Proofs of the Gospel, and the Miracles of Christ.

I have mentioned that multitudes were witnesses to the miracles of Christ. Undoubtedly thousands, and ten thousands could have given attestation to their being performed. This proves to a demonstration, that there is in their history no fiction: and these wonderful works were certainly accomplished, and believed. For the evangelists wrote primarily for the Jews: and St. Matthew's gospel is particularly said to have been in Hebrew, for the sake of the people in Judea. Now had there been no truth in these operations; if Christ did not feed the five thousand, nor raise the dead; nor give sight to the blind: these thousands, and ten thousands would have risen up against the apostles, and convicted them of a most gross forgery. It was impossible for the disciples of Christ to have published to all the inhabitants of Judea a pretended series of wonders, which would have been contradicted in every instance, and universally

fally exploded. They would have ruined their cause by the very means, which they adopted for its support. But the fact was impossible. How can we suppose that a few men of Galilee, obnoxious, and of no esteem, could persuade a whole nation, that they beheld, what they never saw : and that they heard, what was never told them ? Such an imposture could not have been conceived ; much less carried into execution. They would never have dared to have mentioned, that there was darkness over the whole land at the crucifixion, if no such darkness had prevailed. The gospel therefore was not founded on fiction ; the rapid progress shews it : and the miracles are past controversy confirmed by the numbers of the Jewish nation, who subscribed to these truths.

But to obviate every objection, that may be made, I will suppose, that a question may still be asked—*How can we be sure, that the evangelists wrote so early ; and that so many were still living, who had been eye-witnesses of the facts ?* This, I answer, may be proved, by writers of the apostolic age ; and
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by others in a series immediately after them : who quote the evangelists at large. I believe, not a single chapter is omitted ; nor a single verse, that relates to any doctrine. These writers were widely separated, being of Syria, and Assyria ; of Samaria, Asia Minor, Alexandria, and Carthage. Between these places there was little, or no, correspondence, and consequently there could be no collusion. In short we know for certain, that two of the evangelists were the disciples of Christ : and the two others must have lived at the same time, but were the disciples of Peter and Paul. The Apostle * St. John says, that he was witness to the things, which he described. These evangelists all wrote in the time of the Jewish kingdom, before the city, and polity were ruined. They were of the same lineage ; and addressed themselves to the Jews, first, and then to other people. This is certain, if there be any certainty in history. Hence I return to my former argument—that it is impossible for these writers to have mentioned so many wonderful operations, if they were not true:

* 1 Epist. C. i. v. 1, 2.

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and to have introduced thousands of Jews as eye-witnesses, if thousands, and myriads, were still living, who could have contradicted every article. The miracles therefore were certainly well known and acknowledged. The very enemies of Christianity, such as Celsus, Porphyry, Julian, did not pretend to deny them : though some would fain attribute the performance to magic. These writers refer continually to the scriptures : quote innumerable passages : and allow the mighty operations there recorded, as will be presently shewn. To these miracles was owing the rapid progress of the gospel among the Jews : bigotted and averse, as they at first were. It soon spread, and was received among various nations. The Jews still remain : but how seldom is it that we now can make a single proselyte ? I speak not of the Jews of Portugal, and Spain, who are converted by fire and faggot ; but I speak of rational conviction. There is reason to think, that there were more converted by the apostles in one day, than have since been won over in the last thousand years. This was effected by signs and wonders.

wonders. Upon these evidences God founded his church : *and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

There is another truth, of which we may be certain : this is, that the evangelical writings have been transmitted to us uncorrupted. Of this we are assured from the uniformity in the numerous quotations made in different places, and at different eras. The disputes also in the church, and even the heresies, were attended with this good ; that they put the writers concerned upon their guard, and made them carefully watch their adversaries : so that no alteration of any consequence could be admitted. This may be farther proved from the different versions, which in all the material articles agree.

After all, the strongest proof in favour of the gospel histories, to a well-disposed mind, arises from the excellence of the doctrines, which they contain : and which are no where else to be found. The divine truths, and the pure and rational worship, which, exclusive of many other parts of

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scripture,

scripture, may be learned from our Saviour's sermon on the mount, or from the four last chapters of St. Paul to the Romans, were unknown to the wisest of the Gentile writers. They exceed every thing that Cicero or Seneca taught : or that is to be found in the ethics of Aristotle or Plutarch. Even Socrates had no idea of the mental perfection recommended. It was beyond the conception of unassisted man.

The many excellent books, which have been in different ages written, either in defence of the Christian religion, or as comments upon its doctrines, shew the excellence of the subject, of which they treat. For what our Saviour says of men, may be very justly applied to those repositories of divine truths.—* *Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns? or figs of thistles?—A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.—Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.* In short it must be the fountain of

* Matt. vii. 16, &c.

life, from whence so many salutary streams are derived. Had Christianity been an idle story, such an excellent system could not have been founded upon it.

Concerning the Opinions, which prevailed, of the Coming of the Messiah.

Our Saviour by the prophet Haggai is stiled *the desire of all nations*. Chap. ii. 7. And he is alluded to in the prophecy of the patriarch Jacob, according to the Greek version, *as the expectation of the Gentiles*. Thus much is certain, that about the time, that he came into the world, and for some time afterwards, a person of his character was expected. Josephus, who was born so very soon after our Saviour's death, takes notice of this; but imagined, like the rest of the Jews, that the person was to be a temporal prince. What is extraordinary, the same history is afforded us by some Gentile writers; whose evidence must be of consequence. The first of these is Tacitus, who seems to confine the opinion to the Jews, *many of whom, he says, were per-*
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suaded,

suaded, from the contents of their sacred writings, that the eastern country would be prevalent : and from Judea would come those, who were to have the sovereignty of the whole world. Hist. l. v. c. 13. p. 562. var. Suetonius, like the two former, lived in the first century, and mentions the same circumstance; but speaks of the notion as more widely extended. *An ancient and uniform opinion had prevailed all over the east, that it was destined for people from Judea about this time to rule over the world.* These writers refer the prophecy to Vespasian : with whose character it does not at all accord. To this application Josephus led the way out of adulation to the emperor. In doing this he acted against conviction : for as he was a Jew, and of the priesthood, he must have known, that Vespasian was not of the seed of Abraham ; nor of the tribe of Judah ; nor of the family of David ; nor born at Bethlehem ; nor the offspring of a virgin. Yet, however misapplied, these are wonderful attestations. They shew, that the ancient prophecies existed : and we know to whom they related, and that they were

were literally fulfilled in Christ, the true Messiah.

To this general expectation perhaps was owing the expedition of the Magi from the east to pay their homage to the infant King of the Jews. They probably came from Persia ; where traditions concerning the birth of Christ had been preserved from the time of Daniel, and others of the prophetic family, who had resided at Susa, and in other parts of that country. From them I imagine that this knowledge was derived : and from their doctrines and example the Persians, though Zabians, had maintained a purer mode of worship, than any of the neighbouring nations. For this reason they were directed by a heavenly light, and blessed with the sight of their Saviour.

*Farther Account of the Ministry, and
Doctrines of Christ.*

At the time appointed by the Mosaic law Our Saviour entered upon his ministry : and proved his divine mission by a series of wonderful operations. At the same time he began to preach the gospel,
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and

and to introduce a new dispensation; by which all the types and figures of the old law, and all the ceremonies, and sacrifices for sin, were to be made void, and cease. In the room of these he instituted a more rational worship, the religion of the heart. Hence it was very truly said, that *the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*. He shewed, 'that our first regard was to be paid to our Creator; whom we are to worship and love, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength. Mark xii. 30. *This is the first and great commandment*. We are farther told, that God is a *spirit*: and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth. That He seeth in secret, but rewardeth openly. That He is the Father of all, a God of all goodness and mercy; and that through the Son, we have access to Him, and are reconciled by his blood: and from thence have the privilege of addressing Him, as Father, being *His children by adoption and grace*. In respect to our neighbour, we are to love him as ourselves: for *love is the fulfilling of the law*.

law. We are ordered to avoid all revenge; and all retaliation, as far as reason and justice will permit: and never to let *the sun go down upon our wrath.* To love our enemies: to do good to those, that hate us: and not to return railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing. That by kind returns, and friendly overtures, we may *heap coals of fire upon the head of our enemies*; to the production of charity and peace. For the completion of the whole this most excellent rule is given—*As ye would, that men should do to you, do ye also to them.* Luke vi. 31. We are likewise to retain no national prejudices, as we are brethren, however dispersed, all of one family: and a mutual affection should subsist between all, whether Samaritan, Jew, or Gentile.

We are likewise ordered to be obedient to rulers; and to all those, who are put in authority over us. Obey them, saith the Apostle, *who have rule over you.* Heb. xiii. 17. *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities, and powers; to obey magistrates: to be ready to every good work; to speak evil of no man: to be no brawlers; but*
I 4
gentle,

gentle, shewing all meekness to all men. Ep. to Titus iii. 1, 2. In another place he distinguishes between the works of the Spirit, and the works of the flesh. Now the works of the flesh are manifest : and among these are —hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, beresies.—But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against these there is no law. Galat. v. 19, &c. He therefore gives this general ordinance : Let every soul be subject to the higher powers : for there is no power but of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God : and they, that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation.—Render therefore to all their due : tribute, to whom tribute is due : custom, to whom custom : fear, to whom fear : honour, to whom honour. Romans xiii. 1. 2—7. St. Peter speaks to the same purpose : Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme ; or unto governors, as unto them, that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers ; and for the praise of them, that do well. For so is the will

will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. The Apostle then concludes with the following summary advice: Honour all men: love the brotherhood: fear God: honour the King. 1 Peter ii. 13, &c.

In respect to the duty, which we owe to ourselves, we are above all things enjoined to observe mental purity; and not to suffer our eyes to wander, nor our thoughts to rove; nor to indulge in any ideal sensuality, to the hurt of our immortal soul. On the contrary we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice; and perform a *reasonable and spiritual service*: and make an offering of the heart; which is the true and acceptable offering with God. This is the most compleat system, that ever was framed: to which no worldly philosophy, no moral sense, no light of nature, was able to give birth. Its excellence shews its divine origin; as nothing but wisdom from above could have disclosed these heavenly truths. The ultimate of all was remission of sins through the merits of Christ, and everlasting happiness by faith in his name.

Of

*Of the superior Excellence, and Dignity of
our Saviour.*

As soon as our Saviour enters upon his ministry, he affords a pattern of the most consummate virtue. In him we see the dignity of truth; the perfection of human nature. Nor could we expect less from the immaculate Son of the Father: *the Lamb without spot or blemish*. It was with true confidence, that he demanded of his cruel adversaries——*Which of you convinceth me of sin?* For as the Apostle bears witness, *he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not: but committed himself to him, who judgeth righteously.* 1 Pet. ii. 22. His doctrine was not only calculated for future bliss in the world to come, but also for happiness here: for were it duly observed, it would make an heaven upon earth, and transform men to angels. Plato somewhere remarks, if virtue were to appear in a human form, how it would raise our admiration, and conciliate our esteem. Had he lived in
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the time of our Saviour, he might have seen the beauty of holiness, and virtue veiled in mortality, and affording those pleasing emotions, which he had in theory conceived. It was said by the prophet, that *he was to have no form, nor comeliness* : and we may from hence presume, that there was not in his composition, what is esteemed worldly beauty. But there was grace and dignity in his words, as well as in his deportment, and a wonderful energy in his countenance, which nothing, but his bitter enemies, could withstand. This is manifest from the uncommon reverence paid to him, and from the multitudes, which followed him day after day : who pursued him to his secret retirements ; and could never be sufficiently satisfied with his words and doctrine. But even his enemies sometimes experienced the same influence : and were captivated with his gracious appearance and manner of speaking. When the chief priests sent their emissaries to seize him ; they had not power to execute their commission. And when upon their return, the officers were interrogated, *why they had*
not

*not brought him: the answer was—Never man spake, as he spake. Luke vii. 46. Upon the fatal night in which he was betrayed, when the armed multitude came up to him in the garden, he advanced towards them with all that composure, which innocence inspires, and asked them, who it was, they sought? They answered, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. As soon as he had said unto them, I am he, they retired, and *sat down, (or reclined themselves,) upon the ground. Such was the superiority of his virtue and innocence, that it awed an armed multitude. He then went towards them, and asked them again, Whom seek ye? and they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you, that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let these (my disciples) go their way: John xviii. 4, 5, 6. shewing by these words his great concern in this time of danger, and love, for his friends. Even still they seem to have been so awed by his superior dignity, and goodness, that it is probable, they would have gone off*

• Not fell down, as we translate it.

without

without executing their purpose. But one of his followers, with a mistaken zeal, drew his sword, and wounded a servant of the high-priest. This produced a commotion, and they then laid hold of Jesus, and led him away.

He forgave sins, and knew the thoughts of the heart: and was often grieved with the perverseness and insensibility, which he perceived lurking within. This hardness of heart, and the cruel designs of his adversaries, gave him frequent opportunities of shewing his patience, long-suffering, and consummate fortitude; which nothing could shake. His behaviour was always noble and ingenuous. When the Jews assailed him with insnaring questions, he does not dwell upon their treachery, and ungrateful returns; nor upbraid them with their insidious designs: but comes to the point directly, making truth his great and immediate object. This he urges home, and it comes always with such weight, as to overpower his adversaries; who generally turn their backs, convinced, and at the same time confounded, with the wisdom of his answers.

fwers. Above all things his compassion
 was manifested: which he shewed in a
 most affecting manner towards his mistaken
 friends, and extended it to his most obdu-
 rate enemies. What can be more aggra-
 vating, than for a person to have his grand
 scheme continually misapprehended, his best
 designs thwarted; and every mark of di-
 vine interposition attributed to the powers
 of darkness? At the same time, with all
 his charity and benevolence, to be himself
 stiled a Samaritan, and a devil? These were
 repeated insults and cruel returns: yet his
 good-will and compassion were still upper-
 most: and his fortitude prevalent to the
 last. But it was never so nobly exerted, as
 when he was brought before the Sanhe-
 drim, or great council of the nation, and
 had the high-priests, and all the people,
 conspiring his ruin. Such was the inno-
 cence of his life, that his adversaries could
 not produce a single article, that could tend
 to convict him. Our Saviour stood mute,
 and resigned: and there was no way left to
 gain evidence, but from his own words.
 The high-priest accordingly applied to him,
 but

but could obtain no return. At last he adjured him *by the living God* to declare, whether he acknowledged himself to *be the Son of God*. This was a dangerous and insinuating question: it brought him to a cruel alternative; and his life depended upon the answer. But what was life to Jesus, the Lord of life: who *came into the world to bear witness of the truth*? He with proper dignity asserted, that *he was the Son of God*: and that he should one day judge the world. They then induced Pilate to ask him, if he were *the King of the Jews*. He with the same composure answered, that he was: though *his kingdom was not of this world*. Upon these two articles they proceeded to procure his condemnation: of which the one they esteemed blasphemy; and the other treason. And though the Roman governor declared openly, that he found *nothing in him worthy of death*, nor * *any fault at all*: yet they obstinately insisted upon his being crucified. In consequence of this he was led away, and consigned to a most

* John xviii. 38.

cruel,

cruel, and ignominious death. And, having been for a while suspended in great agony between two thieves, he at length gave up the ghost, with his last breath interceding for his murderers. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* So amiable, and so faultless, a character, was never to be found among the sons of men : its superiority proves it to have been of divine original.

Concerning the internal Evidence, with which the Sacred Writings are accompanied.

In this manner I have attempted to shew the excellence of the Christian system ; and the accumulated evidence, with which it is attended. No histories have been transmitted with such incontestable marks of truth, as the Evangelical writings. There is nothing in them superficial, and unnecessary. On the contrary, they are fraught with intelligence, and matter of great moment : and abound *with wisdom, which maketh wise to salvation* : They are artless in their composition, and concise : yet are attended with a degree of conviction, such as
no

no art can afford. It was the Aristotelian opinion, that the rudest block of marble contains in it a latent statue : and within that other figures, which want only a little art and industry to bring them forth to day. Analogous to this notion the sacred writings abound with hidden truths, enveloped in the same matter, which due care and attention will readily disclose. They may be looked upon as containing the richest mine, that ever existed : a mine abounding with precious ore, which no labour can exhaust. They are written with the utmost impartiality ; the great purpose of the writers being only to transmit a true character of their master, and an account of his gospel. .In respect to themselves all their faults and failings are acknowledged : their backwardness, their misconceptions, and blindness, marked : and above all, their apostacy, and desertion, at that critical season, when our Saviour overlooked his own danger, and consulted only for their safety. The trespass of St. Peter, when he denied his master, is recorded by every evangelist at large : and his violence in the garden is

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also

also mentioned by all ; and adjudged to him by St. John. In short, the spirit of truth, breathes in every line of this sacred history : and every line affords matter of edification to the sincere and intelligent inquirer. The reason, why there are so many Deists in the world, arises either from their total ignorance of these writings, or an imperfect knowledge, which is more fatal than ignorance. For the person not at all acquainted can say nothing : but the half-read and superficial abounds with cavil, and misrepresentation. But whoever is a friend to virtue and truth, and zealous for divine knowledge, will find ample store in this sacred repository. Nobody with sincerity of heart can read the Scriptures ; but by the blessing of God he must be a believer.

IV.

GENTILE AUTHORITY.

Of the Testimony of Gentile Writers in favour of Christianity : and first of that great Enemy, the Emperor Julian.

I Have mentioned the many evidences in favour of the gospel afforded by writers of the apostolic age, and by those, who, in great numbers and from all parts of the world, immediately succeeded. By these the authenticity of the sacred volumes, and the times when they were written, have been most satisfactorily ascertained. As the like evidences may be also obtained from the most inveterate enemies of the gospel, we from hence may gain another proof to the same purpose. For this good has providentially arisen from evil, that

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those,

those, who like Celsus, Pliny, Porphyry, and Julian, traduce both Christians, and Christianity, afford strong evidence in their favour. This is effected both by their quotations, and their comments: and by the character, which they are obliged to give of those, whom they strive to abuse. For they neither could deny the sacred histories, nor the miracles, which they describe. Of this we have a remarkable instance in the invective of the Emperor Julian. * *Jesus, says he, who made a few proselytes from the dregs of the people, has not been known by name much above three hundred years: and during his whole life did nothing worthy of being recorded: unless the curing of some halt and blind people; and exorcising some demoniacs, at the villages of Bethsaida, and Bethany, may be ranked among actions of consequence. This is by no means fairly represented; but it is sufficient, that he allows the wonderful facts: and shews, that the worst enemies of Christ, and his gospel, could not deny these*

* Jul. part ii. p. 191.

truths.

truths. Of the number, and greatness of the operations we are full as good judges, as he was.

He mentions the * evangelists by name, and quotes many passages from them : as well as from the prophets. Among others he treats of the first † chapter of St. John ; and of Christ being the Word of God, and of the Word being made flesh, and the acceptation in which it was at that time understood. This is repeated soon after ; when he upbraids the Christians, with too much truth, for worshipping at the tombs of persons departed : a custom, which at that time had taken place. *If*, says he, ‡ *Christ told you, that sepulchres were full of uncleanness : why do you choose those places to offer up your prayers to God?* He shews great inveteracy to our Saviour, as may be seen in his epistles to the Alexandrians. § *They who nursed your city like a tender legitimate daughter, did not bring it to its present amplitude by the preaching of Jesus : nor did they produce that polity, un-*

* Jul. part. ii. p. 327.

† L. x. p. 335.

‡ Ibid. p. 333.

§ Epist. li. p. 433.

der which it is happily directed, by the doctrines of the execrable Galileans. Under this name he continually speaks of the Christians. And having thus set aside Christ, he treats of the Sun, as the great and beneficent deity, and of the Moon, by which all things were produced:—and then says— Neither of these have ye the confidence to worship. But this Jesus, whom neither ye, nor your fathers, ever saw, you maintain to be God, and the Logos, or Word. After having mentioned the Jews, or Hebrews, he tells the Christians, that they never imitated them in holiness of life: † But what you copy from them is their fury and bitterness in overturning temples, and altars. And you murder, not only those of our persuasion, who follow the religion of their forefathers; but those also, who like yourselves have wandered from the truth: and whom ye esteem hereticks, because they do not offer the same dirges to the ‡ dead. But these are your own devices. For neither Jesus, nor Paul, gave you any commission to act in this manner. It*

* Epist. li. p. 434.
dead person.

† Part ii. p. 206.

‡ Or, to the

is certain that an evil spirit began to operate among Christians in those days: and in some places there had been outrages committed, which it would be in vain to palliate. But Julian, though no friend, yet distinguishes between the law and the abuse of the law: and undesignedly bears a true } testimony to Christ and his Apostle.

He speaks however of the Christians as persons in general of * holy life: and desires his people to copy after them. He mentions their † charity: by which he says solely they had supported *their base system*. In his letter to ‡ Arfacius he begs, that their example may be followed. *Why must we rest in what has been done, and not proceed to those advantages, by which that base religion (of the Galileans) has been promoted? I mean their charity, and benevolence to strangers; their care about the funerals of their friends; and the appearance of sanctity, that they put on: all which we ought duly to observe. It is quite shameful, when we do not see a single Jew begging, and when those detestable*

• Epist. xlii. p. 423.

† Fragment, part i.

p. 305, 363.

‡ Epist. xlix. p. 429, 430.

[illegible]

• TALKING TO THE PRESS

... ἡμεῖς οὕτως ἐκτιθέμεθα—ἀλλ' εἶποι ὁ μὲν θεοσιβίης
... ἀληθὲς οὐτα δυνατότατον, καὶ
... αὐτὰς μὲν ᾗ supplied in the following
... ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς θεοσιβίης (φαινεται) οὐτις. Επει-
... ἀλλ' ἀληθὲς οὐτα δυνατότατον καὶ
... in this manner I shall take the liberty to trans-

conducted:

*conducted: the same, I am persuaded, that we also worship under different names. They therefore seem to me to act very consistently, as they are not transgressors of the laws; but only err in paying their worship to this one God to the neglect of all the rest: and in thinking, that we only, whom they stile the Gentiles, are precluded from his influence *, &c.* Thus we find, that truth, will sometimes, like lightning from a dark cloud, force its way: and notwithstanding the prejudices, and inveteracy, of this unhappy apostate, he affords strong evidence in favour both of the gospel and its votaries. We have seen above that he mentions the Evangelists and St. Paul by name, and quotes from their writings, and from the writings of the prophets; and affords us his opinion of their being undoubtedly genuine. He recommends the Christians, for their decent appearance, as examples to his own priests and people: and acknowledges that they were obedient to the laws, worshippers of God the creator of all things, and only deficient in not paying adoration to the two

• The latter part is defective.

luminaries,

luminaries, and to the other Deities of the Gentile world: making that a failing, which was a virtue. Lastly, he mentions their faith and fortitude, in maintaining the religion of Christ: which no pains, nor penalties, could make them renounce.

Attestation of Celsus, from Origen.—
Edit. Cantab.

Celsus was an Epicurean philosopher, and prior to Julian by two centuries. He flourished in the reign of Adrian, and wrote a severe book against christianity, which book he stiled *The Word of Truth*. As he lived so early, he had probably seen some of the later disciples of the apostles; especially those, who had been conversant with St. John. From the various articles, which he opposes, we may learn for certain, what was admitted as gospel in his time. We have therefore thus far evidence in favour of the sacred writings. For many of the principal passages in the Evangelists and Apostles, as well as in the Old Testament, are either quoted, or alluded to, by him.

He

He speaks of ¹ Moses, and the creation; and refers often to the prophets. He speaks also of ² Christ, and his incarnation; and of his being born of a ³ virgin: and mentions his flight into ⁴ Egypt. He acknowledges, that his disciples looked upon him as a divine ⁵ personage, and accordingly ⁶ worshipped him, as the ⁷ Son of God. He alludes frequently to the Holy ⁸ Spirit; and mentions God under the title of the ⁹ Most High: and speaks collectively of the ¹⁰ Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as transmitted by the evangelists. He does not deny the miracles of Christ, nor of his apostles; but attributes them to ¹¹ magick. Lastly, the

¹ Of the creation of the world. Origen. L. vi. p. 311.

317.

² Birth of Christ. Ibid. L. i. p. 22—30. 32.

³ Born of a virgin. L. i. p. 30.

⁴ Flight into Egypt. L. i. p. 30.

⁵ Christ's divinity. L. vi. p. 325. 327. L. viii. p. 388.

⁶ His worship. L. viii. p. 385. 387, 388.

⁷ Christ the Son of God. L. vi. p. 303. L. viii. p. 385, 386, 387.

⁸ Of the Holy Spirit. L. vi. p. 323. 325. L. vii. p. 363.

⁹ The Most High God. L. viii. p. 423.

¹⁰ Of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. L. vii. p. 337.

¹¹ Christ's miracles attributed to magick. L. i. p. 7. 30. and p. 34. 55. L. ii. p. 92, 93.

crucifixion

¹² crucifixion of our Saviour, his ¹³ death, ¹⁴ resurrection, and his ¹⁵ appearing to his disciples afterwards, together with the ¹⁶ darkness, and earthquake, at his decease, are mentioned by him. Many other articles of consequence occur in the course of his work. It is true, he continually objects, and disbelieves. But those very objections prove, that these histories, and doctrines, existed: and must necessarily have been antecedent to his cavils, which is all that we want to know from him. Thus he has throughout the whole of his work contributed indirectly towards the establishment of the truth, and the canon of scripture. And as I have before said, we must give up all history, if we set aside such evidence.

¹² His crucifixion. L. ii. p. 102.

¹³ His death. L. vii. p. 355.

¹⁴ His resurrection. L. ii. p. 93, 94. L. vii. p. 352, 353.

¹⁵ His appearance afterwards. L. ii. p. 95, 96. 98. 100, 101. L. vii. p. 355.

¹⁶ Of the darkness and earthquake at the crucifixion, L. ii. p. 94.

Of Porphyry's Attestation.

The like evidence may be obtained from Porphyry, who was as great an enemy to christianity as Celsus, or Julian. Yet he seems in some degree to have acted against conviction, as Eusebius very justly intimates. For he allowed the superiority of Christ over the Demons, which he worshipped. * *How little (says that author) the power and influence of these evil spirits has prevailed, ever since our Saviour made his transitory abode among men, may be known from the treatise of that great advocate for demon-worship Porphyry, which he wrote against us Christians; where he speaks in the following manner.—And now they wonder, that a sickness has prevailed in this City so many years, when Æsculapius, and so many other Gods, no longer reside here. For since Jesus has been revered within these precincts, we have never experienced any the least assistance from the other deities. If Rome was the city, to which he alludes, it was*

* Præp. Evangel. L. v. p. 181. C. and D.

the head quarters of Paganism. It is therefore wonderful, if these gods had ever existed, that they should thus forsake their votaries, unless they yielded to a superior power. This is intimated by Porphyry, though he is not willing to own it: and Eusebius in consequence of it says very truly, *If he confesses, that since the introduction of Jesus and his worship, no publick advantage has ever accrued from Æsculapius, and the other deities, why does he still retain any regard for these deities and heroes?* For he allows, that they fled at the name of Jesus, and deserted their best friends. In him likewise are to be found references to many important parts of scripture.

Evidence from Pliny.

Pliny the younger was born in the first century, and within less than thirty years after the death of our Saviour. And he has transmitted a particular account of the constancy of the first Christians, and the cruel trials, which they were obliged to undergo. These trials were brought upon many of them by Pliny himself, who in
the

the beginning of the second century had been by the Emperor Trajan made president of Bithynia. He confesses, that he found in them no appearance of guilt : on the contrary he intimates, that their religion was founded in morality ; and their only mistake was (as he presumed it to be) their worshipping of Christ. Upon this account he put so many to death, that he was weary of executions, and wrote to Trajan to know, how he should for the future proceed. His doubts upon this occasion are very extraordinary ; and such, as one would have imagined, could never have been entertained by a man of learning and a philosopher, or any rational being.

** I have been, says he, under no small degree of uncertainty, whether I should make any difference in respect to their time of life : or whether those of tender age, and those in a state of maturity, should be esteemed alike obnoxious. Also, whether any indulgence should be made towards those, who may repent of their error : or whether the having been a*

• Epist. 91.

Christian

Christian should make repentance void. Lastly, whether the very name of Christian without any guilt should be sufficient for condemnation: or whether it were necessary for some crime to be annexed to the name to warrant me to proceed so far. Who would think, that a person of common sense, and at all tinctured with humanity, and who had the least idea of truth and justice, should want information in so plain a case? And if he did want it, that he should have blindly gone on without asking this salutary advice, till he was tired with punishment, and had consigned such numbers to death? *As yet, says he, my course of proceeding in respect to those, who are brought before me as Christians, has been in the following manner. I have asked them first, if they were of that sect. If they answered in the affirmative, I put the same question to them again twice, and threatened them with the punishment, which would be the consequence of their persisting. If they were still obstinate, I ordered them to be led away.* This leading away was not merely to death, but often to be worried by wild beasts in the circus: at other times to the
 most

most horrid torments. * Athenagoras in his elegant address to the two reigning Emperors shews, that this unjust process prevailed in other places. All other people, says this excellent writer, enjoy under your government their particular mode of worship unmolested. And to every person, who is accused, there is a fair opportunity granted for his clearing himself: but the very name of Christian is sufficient for † condemnation. Tertullian and other authors mention, that as soon as the word Christian was pronounced before the judge, the cry was—*to the beasts:—to the lions:* and the supposed criminal was accordingly exposed and torn to pieces. Pliny proceeds to give a reason for his acting in this manner—*For I made no scruple to determine, that, whatever their confession might turn out, their stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished.* We find here, that one question was put to them three times with a menace: but neither instruction, nor per-

* Apology, p. 279, 280.

† Justin Martyr, in his apology, speaks to the same purpose, p. 46. § 5.

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suasion,

suasion, administered. Yet he pronounces them obstinate: though all their crime was the remaining in a system, in which nothing of any evil tendency was pretended to be discovered. Besides he did not consider, that what in a bad cause we esteem * obstinacy, in a good cause is fortitude and praise-worthy. But he never searched into the cause to know whether it was bad or good.

He afterwards mentions some, who were Roman citizens, and under the same infatuation, as he terms it, and were accordingly dispatched to Rome. There were others, who through fear had been brought to sacrifice their faith, in which some of them had before persevered for twenty years: but declared that they had renounced it, and were not Christians. *All these, says Pliny to the Emperor, paid adoration to your image and to the statutes of the gods. They likewise † blasphemed Christ. These (upon examination) affirmed, that this*

* The Emperor Antoninus imputes the rational fortitude of the Christians to obstinacy.

† Maledixerunt.

was the whole of their fault, or mistake: They used, upon a particular stated day (Sunday) to assemble (*ante lucem*) before it was light; and all joined in a hymn to Christ as a God. And they bound themselves by an oath, not for a sanction to any vice, but on the contrary, to preserve themselves guiltless of all robbery, and adultery: likewise that they would never break their word; nor refuse, when called upon, to return any pledge, which had been entrusted to their hands. When this was compleated, they used to retire: and some time afterwards to come again and take bread, which they received (men and women) promiscuously, and in the most innocent manner. This rite however they had left off, ever since an edict of mine was published; by which in consequence of your mandate I had forbidden all such meetings. By the confession of these persons, who had been forced to abandon the cause, it appeared, that the whole process of the Christians in these parts was not merely blameless, but praise-worthy. And though they were not conscious of the least harm, but on the contrary strove to promote every private, and public virtue,

yet they arose before day-break to perform their duty to God; that their worship, however innocent, and laudable, might not give offence. And as there was so much said in their favour, and not one word to their prejudice, we might justly expect, that if they did not meet with encouragement, they at least obtained indemnity, in consequence of their obedience, and virtuous behaviour. Not in the least, as we may learn from Pliny's words. *I was from hence more and more induced to make farther trial, and this by torture; which was performed upon two maids, who are stiled ministers: but I could discover nothing more, than a base and extravagant superstition.* Good Heavens! who could think, that a person of such an excellent character, as Pliny, should be so lost to all justice and humanity? He calls the religion of this persecuted people extravagant and base: though he had been informed by indisputable evidence, that it contained nothing, that was wild or irregular: on the contrary it was shewn to be a mild, rational, and benevolent system, productive of much good, and
attended

attended with no evil. In his examination of the two unfortunate women, who were deaconesses, and assisted at their private assemblies, he shews a more than ordinary cruel purpose, in choosng persons, who from their natural delicacy of frame, and mildness of disposition, were most likely to yield to the tortures, to which they were to be exposed. In consequence of this he thought that he should force from them much sooner than from men, whatever he wanted them to own. Whether they died under these torments, or were put to death afterwards, is not said. It is certain, that nothing but the truth could be extorted from them; and that they shewed invincible fortitude, which was misinterpreted contumacy, and pronounced, as we have before seen, a crime worthy of death. And we may from hence presume, that death was their portion.

Pliny being at last tired with these repeated instances of severity tells the Emperor, that he should proceed no farther till he had his direction, upon account of the numbers, whose lives would be en-

dangered. *For many of all ages, and of both sexes, are brought into jeopardy: and the number will continually encrease. Nor is it only over cities, that this pestilential superstition has diffused itself; but through the villages all over the country: yet the progress may be stopped, and the evil corrected. This is certain: the temples, which were almost desolated, begin to be frequented, and the sacred rites after a long omission are renewed: the carcases also of the victims, which could hardly find a purchaser, are now sold at large. From hence we may easily conceive, how great a number of people may be reformed, if there be room given for repentance. We see, that hitherto the very name of Christian was sufficient for condemnation, without inquiry made, or defence admitted. And Trajan, as we find by his answer, did little towards remedying the evil. He only directs Pliny, not to have them searched after: but, if any, says the Emperor, be accused, and proved to be Christians, let them be punished accordingly; and, as it is intimated, without any farther inquiry. This punishment was uniformly death, but in various and horrid shapes,*

shapes, as we learn from the histories of those excellent persons, who were made victims.

The Account given by Tacitus.

It would take up a volume to collect all the accounts, transmitted by different writers, of the cruelties exercised upon those holy martyrs by their infernal persecutors. I shall therefore confine myself to the evidence of Tacitus, a Gentile historian, who describes that very early * persecution, which commenced in the reign of † Nero: but with the same prejudices, as those persons, of whom we have spoken before. This Emperor had been accused of having wantonly set fire to Rome. *To free himself therefore from this imputation, he laid the guilt upon others, and accordingly made them suffer the most exquisite torments. These were a set of people sufficiently odious for their flagitiousness, and commonly called Christians. The person, from whom they received this*

* Annals, Book xv. c. 44. p. 1066. Var.

† In this persecution St. Peter and St. Paul suffered,

name, was Christus, who in the reign of Tiberius suffered death under his procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, which (commenced in him and) was smothered for a time, burst forth again, not only over all Judea, where the evil originated, but as far as Rome, whither all things atrocious and infamous flow in, as to a center, and are practised openly. At first only those were seized, who confessed themselves Christians: afterwards others, whom they discovered, to a vast amount; and who were condemned, not so much for setting fire to the city, as for their uniform hatred of all mankind. I must stop here to observe, that the historian, like many other writers, blends two sets of people together, the Christians, and the Jews: of whom the latter probably bore some share in this persecution, and suffered with the former. To these was imputed that unsocial spirit, and hatred of mankind, mentioned above. Of the Christian charity, and philanthropy, their worst enemy Julian bore witness. With them—love was the fulfilling of the law; which love was extended to all mankind.

The

The historian proceeds to inform us of the cruelties and contempt, which these glorious martyrs were doomed to undergo. It was so contrived, he says, that in their sufferings they should be exposed to scorn, and their misery rendered ridiculous. *For this purpose they were inclosed in the skins of wild beasts, that they might be torn to pieces by dogs: or else they were fastened to crosses. Others were appointed to be (by some diabolical art) set on fire: and it was so ordered, that they should (in this inflamed state) after they had been in torment all day, serve for lights (in the streets) by * night. Nero had made an offer of his gardens for the exhibition of these spectacles: and he appointed a mock Circensian festivity for their farther celebration. Here he mixed with the mob in the habit of a charioteer: or else viewed these spectacles from his car. This behaviour pro-*

* I imagine, from a passage in Juvenal, that they had deep holes made in different parts of the body, in which wax tapers were inserted. In this manner they were exposed by day and by night in the streets: and when these tapers burned down to the quick, the pain in consequence of it must have been very great, and the spectacle, which the poor sufferers exhibited, must have been horrid.

duced

duced some commiseration towards the sufferers, however guilty they might be, and deserving whatever could be inflicted: for it appeared, that they were not sacrificed out of regard to public utility; but merely to gratify the cruelty of one person. Here we have again condemnation without proof, and guilt imputed without any crime alledged. For as to setting fire to the city, the author acquits the Christians; and proceeds only upon that vague and mistaken notion of their being enemies to mankind.

But there were other * modes of punishment and execution among the Romans, and the subordinate nations, to which the Christians were in all places liable. Such was the Uncus, or hook; the Eculeus, the Palus and Stipes, upon which they seem to have been impaled: a mode of torment too shocking to be described. Also the iron chair with grates beneath, upon which, when heated, the poor victims were placed. But the most common, and favourite punishment to the spectators was their being

* See Seneca's *Consolatio ad Marciam*, vol. i. p. 284.

exposed

exposed to wild * beasts in the Circus: as this afforded a greater variety of cruel satisfaction. In this manner numbers were put to death; not only at Rome, but in many of the chief cities both in the east and in the west, at a great distance from the capital. The very edicts of some Emperors to this purpose are still extant, and others are recorded, though lost.

*Farther Account of the more early
Persecutions.*

Many excellent persons laid down their lives for the sake of the gospel during these perilous times. In the persecution under Trajan, † Ignatius bishop of Antioch, a man of singular piety, who had been conversant with the apostles, was sent for from Syria to Rome, where he was exposed to wild beasts, and torn to pieces. The venerable Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna, and in like manner suffered martyrdom. When he was brought before the ‡ pro-

* Euseb. Ecclesiast. Hist. L. v. p. 206, 208, &c.

† Ibid. L. iii. C. 36. p. 130.

‡ Ibid. L. iv. C. 14. p. 160.

consul,

consul, he was desired to renounce Christ. But he answered, that he had served him sixty-eight years ; and could never be brought to forsake his master. He had been a disciple of St. John, and laboured much towards the advancement of Christianity : till in the reign of Marcus Antoninus he was called forth, and condemned to be exposed to wild beasts. But it not being a proper day for those horrid sports, to prevent any delay, they burnt him alive. Justin Martyr was a person of great learning : and seems to have been the first who attempted to foil the Grecians at their own weapons ; and to bring evidence from their writers to shew the vanity of their pretensions either in respect to the excellence of their religion, or antiquity of their law-givers. He was a proselyte of * Samaria in Palestine, but of Grecian parentage ; and among other places resided in Rome, where he suffered martyrdom in the reign of Antoninus Philosophus. At Lyons and at Vienne there had been a church founded

* Euseb. Ecclesiast. Hist. L. iv. c. 16. p. 174. See also Irenæus, Tertullian, Jerome.

very early; and, as we may judge, either in the days of the apostles, or soon after. In the reign of the same Emperor Antoninus multitudes were sought out by informers, and suffered here for their faith: and among the rest * Pothinus, their venerable bishop. At the age of ninety he underwent stripes, and other cruel usage, under which he sunk and died in prison. † The cruelties here exercised were beyond description shocking. In the persecution under Trajan, Simeon bishop of Jerusalem, after having suffered many tortures, was at last ‡ put to death. He was the son of Cleopas, the brother of Joseph; who by his marriage with the Virgin Mary became the reputed father of our Saviour. Hence, as § Simeon was esteemed the relation of Christ, we may presume, that he was one

* Eusebius, above, L. v. c. i. p. 204, &c.

† See the curious letter of the churches of Vienne and Lyons to the churches of Asia; in which an account is given of the persecution, which had raged in Gaul; and the manifold and cruel sufferings of the martyrs. Ibid. p. 198.

‡ Euseb. L. iii. c. 32. p. 126.

§ Hegesippus. Euseb. L. iii. c. 11. p. 105. Irenæus above.

of his early disciples. Nor did he shew himself unworthy of that alliance; for after the sufferings mentioned above he was at last crucified in the hundred and twentieth year of his age.

These were some of the principal persons, who in different parts of the world laid down their lives for the gospel of Christ: and with them multitudes of others in the same glorious manner gave attestation to the truth. These persecutions were universal, and very grievous: nor are there to be found in the annals of time any instances of such bitterness and cruelty, as were exercised towards the Christians. From these distant persecutions we are certified of the progress of the gospel, and of the regions, where it had taken place.

Though the sufferings of the Christians were great, yet their constancy was superior. Nothing could equal their fortitude. Some of them in the first persecution, and even in the second, had probably been formerly witnesses to the miracles of our Saviour. Great numbers had seen the apostles and been their disciples: hence they
were

were undoubtedly well acquainted with the mighty works, which had been at times exhibited by those holy persons. The word of God also, which had been preached to them, came with great force from those immediate delegates of Christ Jesus; and consequently sunk deep in their hearts. Their faith therefore in consequence of it was lively and operative; and their prospects of a future life, and the happiness hereafter, so vivid, and so assured, that they overlooked all things in this world, and were longing for the immortality promised in the next. Hence they braved all terrors; and when forced before rulers and judges, behaved with that dignity and composure, which became the servants of so great a master. In the midst of the tortures, which they were made to undergo, the same fortitude remained: and nothing, but death, could extinguish their zeal for the gospel, and love for their Saviour. But however lively their faith may have been, and however great those advantages from their proximity to Christ and his apostles; yet their own zeal and resolution

tion alone were not, I think, sufficient to uphold them in those cruel conflicts. They were certainly supported by the hand of Heaven : and from thence blessed with that fortitude, which no terrors could appall. For without the divine assistance it seems impossible for the powers of man to have sufficed against those numberless evils, to which they were exposed. How cruel their sufferings were, we have seen from the testimony of Pagan writers, such as Tacitus, and Pliny; and they are also authenticated by the letter of Trajan. From these authors, as well as from a variety of Christian writers, we find, not one or two instances only of persons, who like Vanini, or Lizinski, may have braved death; but of thousands, who sacrificed all that was dear in life, and submitted to the most grievous tortures, which rendered death a blessing. It has been said by some, that they too much courted danger; and exposed themselves unnecessarily to these trials. I believe never unnecessarily; for the times required particular exertion in every good man to set an example to others, and to teach

teach them, that neither death, nor the terrors of death, should have any effect upon the true servants of Christ. Their promptness shewed their zeal, and their faith: and the truth of that religion, upon which their faith was founded.

Mr. Dodwell thinks, that there were not so many put to death, as has been represented: and in proof of it he applies to the legation of Athenagoras. But the learned Benedictine, who published that work, calls him to a very * severe account for having either through carelessness, or else wilfully, misinterpreted that author. Mr. Dodwell was a person of too much honour to have erred designedly: and did not deserve such an imputation. He was however certainly mistaken; for Athenagoras gives a very different account: and concludes with say-

* Dodwelli in hunc locum perabsurda observatio legitur. Dissert. II. Cypr. n. 38.—At Dodwellus oscitanter hallucinatus est, si non animadvertit, quæ sequuntur: vel probi viri non functus officio, si dissimulaverit. Addit enim paulo post Athenagoras—*neque enim ad pecunias spectat inimicorum injuria; neque ad multam ignominia, &c.—sed corporibus, ac vitæ nostræ, postquam projecerimus pecunias, infidiantur.* His adde illam precem—*Quo tandem aliquando mactari desinamus?* Athenag. Legatio. p. 280. n. g.

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ing,

ing, *When shall we cease to be made victims?*

Advantages obtained from Pagan Writers.

There are many more Gentile authors of different times, to whom I might have applied, but I pass them over for brevity's sake. From these, whom I have mentioned, as well as from variety of others, much advantage is to be obtained. For the evidence, which they afford, coming from enemies, cannot be attended with any prejudices in favour of the gospel, and must necessarily have great weight. By their frequent appeal to the Prophets and Evangelists they shew, that they entertained no doubt of the authenticity of the holy scriptures. They likewise discover, in what acceptation many controverted passages were admitted by some of the first Christians. We are likewise informed by them of the charity, and exemplary lives of those Christians, and of their universal benevolence; also their numbers in different parts of the world. From hence we learn, how rapid the progress of Christia-

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nity

nity was in the first, and in the succeeding, century : and even in the days of the apostles. This could not have been effected without the immediate furtherance of the Deity. Nothing but a miraculous interposition could, under such difficulties, have given birth to the system; or so rapidly promoted it. These writers afford also indisputable attestation to the severe conflicts, which the first Christians experienced ; and under which they must have sunk, if they had not been divinely supported. Their faith and constancy was never before, nor since, equalled. Of this, as I have observed, we have not one or two examples transmitted, nor from one city or province : but multitudes from all parts of the Roman empire bore witness to the truth, and signed it with their blood. They took up their cross originally with a prospect of much worldly evil ; and with a resolution to suffer all things rather than deny their Saviour. They were accordingly called forth, and stood their trial ; gloriously laying down their lives for the sake of the gospel. But first they experienced poverty, shame, re-

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proach,

proach, bondage, stripes ; and lastly, mutilation, racks, the rending and tearing of wild beasts, and other the severest tortures, that human malice could invent. These evidences come from the enemies of the gospel : and their authority was never called in question.

False Accusation—concerning the Christians having destroyed the Writings of their Adversaries.

It has been imagined, and maintained, by some writers, that the Christians formerly, out of fear and jealousy, destroyed the works of their adversaries. If they did, they acted very unwisely : for they deprived Christianity of much evidence in its favour. The worst enemies of the gospel have subscribed more or less to its truth. This has been shewn in the accounts afforded above by Pliny, Tacitus, and Julian : and there are other Gentile writers, of whom we have ample remains, and who afford good evidence to my assertion. But the allegation is by no means true : nor was it in the power of the Christians to annihilate

annihilate so many writings of their adversaries. This is manifest from an attempt once made to this purpose. For in the beginning of the fourth century an edict came out from Constantine, by which Porphyry's work against Christianity was ordered to be burnt. And burnt undoubtedly it was: but not all the copies, for that was impossible. Hence we find that it was answered, and quoted by Apollinarius, and Jerome, who both lived afterwards: and a second edict for its suppression was sent forth as late as the reign of the younger Theodosius. Thus it still survived: till at last people grew weary, and, as * Chrysostome says, the work became contemptible, and on this account was neglected, and lost. If we have no longer many of the writings of the Gentile polemicks, we are equally deprived of those of the Christians to a greater amount. They perished alike in the wreck of time. And if the Christians had so little care for their friends, it could not be expected, that they should shew more regard for their

* D. S. Bab. Orat. 2. tom. ii. p. 539. Benedict.

enemies. However the writings of many Gentile philosophers, who were enemies to Christianity, have been more or less transmitted. Such are those of Maximus Tyrius, Marcus Antoninus Philosophus, Celsus, Plotinus, Porphyry, Philostratus, Julian, Libanius, Hierocles, Jamblichus, Eunapius, Proclus. These collectively would amount to many volumes ; and were all preserved by Christians.

Of the great Injustice and Inhumanity both of Pliny, and Trajan, farther considered.

A very worthy person, and an elegant * writer, has mentioned, that, *if we impartially examine the present instance of the persecution of the Christians, we shall find it to have been grounded on the ancient constitution of the state ; and not to have proceeded from an arbitrary and intolerant spirit in Trajan.* And he says, that *Livy mentions it as an established principle of the earlier ages of the commonwealth, to guard against the introduc-*

* Mr. Melmoth, in his translation of Pliny's Epistles. See Vol. ii. Letter 99. p. 306, 7.

*tion of foreign ceremonies of religion. * For nothing could be more prejudicial to the religion of a country, than a foreign mode of sacrificing. He adds—Upon the whole then it appears evident, that these primitive Christians, deeply impressed with the evidence of the holy religion, they professed, nobly dared at all hazard to render themselves obnoxious, not particularly indeed to Trajan, but to the ancient, and intolerant laws of the state, by refusing to join in communion with the established worship; and by holding their meetings at a suspicious hour of the night: which by Pliny, from whom he copies, is stiled—ante lucem.*

I am obliged to dissent from this learned person almost in every article.

1. In the first place, it was impossible for these persecutions to have been grounded upon the ancient constitution of the Roman state; or any mode of acting peculiar to that city. For how could the police of Rome, and its ancient institutes, affect people of Bithy-

* — nihil æque dissolvendæ religionis esse, quam cum non patrio, sed externo, ritu sacrificaretur. L. xxxix. c. 16. p. 578. Var.

nia, or of Pontus : of Syria, Egypt, or Gaul ? They all worshipped their particular deities : and the Romans never in any one instance interfered. The evidence from Livy is not in the least to the purpose.

2. These ancient Christians, so far from *nobly daring at all hazard to render themselves obnoxious*, did every thing in their power to prevent it. They met in secret, and performed their worship in their (*ὑπερώα*) *highest rooms*, to avoid giving offence.

3. For this very reason they rose, as Pliny tells us (*ante lucem*) *before day-light* : which is very improperly rendered—*a suspicious hour of the night* : Thousands must have arisen to their occupations at the same season (*tempore antelucano*) and have been blameless.

4. Their behaviour was undoubtedly *noble* : but they did not display it by any wilful opposition to the law. They shewed it by patience, and resignation, and an implicit obedience in all things, that could be legally and reasonably demanded : and
lastly

lastly by suffering death, rather than give up their religion, and deny their Saviour.

5. They were guilty of no breach of law in assembling together. For there was no law against them, when they were at first so cruelly used by Pliny, and Trajan. The particular prohibitions quoted related, as I have before said, to the immediate police of ancient Rome, and not to Pontus or Bithynia.

6. Their innocence in this respect is farther apparent. For neither Pliny, nor Trajan, accused them of any crime against the state, nor breach of any law, nor of any crime whatever. Not one word to this purpose is intimated: but quite the contrary. Had there been the least grounds for complaint, we should have had the allegation at large.

7. It was forbidden, according to Livy, to introduce any foreign ceremonies or sacrifices. But the Christians used no foreign sacrifices, not even in Bithynia: nor did they sacrifice at all. This ancient law could not in any degree affect them. All that is quoted to this purpose is incompetent.

8. Nor

8. Nor had they any ceremonies, of which they could justly be accused. They were *baptized*, or in other words, dipped in water: and they at stated times partook of *bread and wine*: and at other times *broke bread*: all which were circumstances common to every Roman, and to people of every nation. What mental reverence they might entertain at such seasons was secret, and could not therefore be an object of notice; much less of any law or edict.

9. Nor were they accused of introducing any new gods. On the contrary they were from their spiritual mode of worship esteemed in general atheists. Of this cruel imputation the fathers continually * complain.

10. When the author says, that the Christians—*rendered themselves obnoxious by refusing to join in communion with the established worship*, an unwary reader might be led to think, that the Romans had an uniform mode of worship; and a ritual, like those in the different Christian churches,

* Athenag. Legat. § iii. p. 282. Justin Martyr. Apolog. 1. § vi. p. 47.

to which people were obliged to subscribe. But nothing of this sort was to be found either among the Romans, or the Greeks. They had a multiplicity of deities: and people in general might serve * all, or any, or none. Whatever their choice might have been, no penalty, nor disgrace, ensued. Many of the philosophical sects held their deities in the highest contempt, and paid no worship to them, particularly the Epicureans: yet they were not called to any account for their opinions, nor for their neglect. Virgil, Horace, and Lucretius, were of this fraternity: and yet were held in no small esteem. Lucian was born early in the second century, and flourished in the reign of Marcus Antoninus, who so grievously persecuted the Christians. He wrote against the heathen gods, and ridiculed them grossly. And this ridicule he published to the world, at the very time, when these persecutions were carried on. Yet he was never punished, nor even censured: on the contrary, he had a lucrative, or, as some say, an honourable, office from the

• Athenag. Legat. c. i. p. 279.

very Emperor, who so cruelly afflicted the Christians.

Some of the early fathers, such as Justin Martyr, and Athenagoras, complain heavily, and with great truth, of this undue partiality. * Tertullian mentions, that the Christians were upon an equal footing with the philosophers and others, who maintained their several opinions; and should consequently expect equal candour, and justice: but these were denied them. *What governor, says he, forces any of your philosophers to offer sacrifice; or to bind themselves by particular oaths imposed; or to make any idle illuminations by daylight? And yet they openly labour to annihilate your deities, and in their writings accuse you of superstition; while you stand by, and give them encouragement. Many of them go so far as even to abuse their rulers; and are upheld in so doing. Nay, so far from being exposed to wild beasts, they are rewarded with pensions, and statues.*

In short every religion was tolerated in the Roman empire, except † Christianity.

* Tertull. Apolog. § xlv. p. 35.

† Athenag. Legat. § i. p. 280.

Against this there was an inveterate and intolerant hatred. The name itself was sufficient for condemnation. For this prejudice the following reason may be given. Many of the Gentile philosophers despised the national worship, where they resided: but were very indifferent about its being maintained by others. On the contrary the Christians laboured to annihilate idolatry; and put an end to all superstition. This affected the base worship of every country universally, and brought upon them the hatred of the world. But Christianity triumphed in the end: though not till its teachers and proselytes had undergone for some centuries all that malice could inflict.

It has been said, I know, of the atheist as well as the deist, that they are after all left to the light of nature, and philosophy: and likewise to conscience, where the rule of right is written as plainly and indelibly, as upon brass or marble. Thus indeed it has been affirmed. Yet these helps, notwithstanding these assertions, seem not of themselves sufficient to guide us; as we
may

may judge from those great and learned men, Pliny, Trajan, and Antoninus. Their inhumanity evinces their insufficiency and blindness. In proof of this let us keep in mind the question of Pliny to the Emperor—*Whether the name of Christian alone, though accompanied with no crime, were not sufficient for condemnation?* We have seen Trajan's answer; that he would not have Pliny *make any search after them*: indeed there was no occasion, as the informers were so numerous, and active: *But if they are brought before you, and proved to be Christians, let them be * punished*: which punishment was, in various shapes, *death*. And this without any judicial process, or any regard to the innocence of tender age, or the merits of those more advanced. Pliny indeed proposed an alternative to Trajan; of which he took not the least notice. He desired to know, whether he should condemn the Christians at once for being so

* Mr. M. translates the passage—*let them be corrected*: which is not right. All correction is intended for amendment. But those, who are beheaded, burnt, or otherwise dispatched, have little chance of improvement.

named,

named, or for the * crimes annexed to the name. Now the crimes with which the name of Christian was branded, were † *atheism, the feeding upon human flesh, and an incestuous and indiscriminate commerce at their meetings*. It signified little which side of the alternative Pliny took, as there was no judicial process; and consequently no opportunity for the injured party to clear themselves from these horrid and unjust aspersions. The conduct of Trajan was as inhuman and irrational, as Pliny's; for he left him to act as he pleased for the future, and gave his sanction to all, that was past. Pliny does not ask, how he might acquit: but which was the best plea for condemnation.

The three persons above mentioned were esteemed among the wisest of their day. They enjoyed all that the light of nature

* Mr. Melmoth translates the terms—*crimina cohærentia nomini*—*crimes themselves* (that is *real crimes*) *in the profession*. But this is by no means a true version. What crime could there be in the profession of Christianity?

† Athenag. Legat. c. iii. p. 282, 308, and 312. Just. Martyr. Apolog. c. vi. p. 47. Dialog. cum Tryphone, c. 10. p. 111.

and

and philosophy could afford ; and had the internal director, *conscience*, if that had been sufficient to guide them. Yet they were cool and deliberate murderers. They failed, notwithstanding their attainments, in two essential articles, *humanity*, and *justice*. The poor objects, whom they despised, and sacrificed, would have taught them a better lesson. So superior is Christianity to all worldly wisdom.

IV.

P A R T II.

OF THE UNCERTAINTY, WHICH
PREVAILED AMONG THE
MOST LEARNED OF
THE PHILOSOPHERS

WE have been told a great deal about nature, and the light of nature : and Christianity has been pronounced *as old as the Creation*. By this was meant, that all the essential truths, which are taught in the gospel, were antecedently known by this light : and the Christian system in consequence of it was neither new, nor necessary. But this is a great mistake. How little it is known, and how much it is wanted, at this day, I have shewn from a great part of the world being still in a state

N of

of ignorance. And how much they stood in need of it of old, we learn from the confessions of some of the wisest among the philosophers, both of Asia, and Greece. They looked with longing eyes for some divine information; but could never attain to the blessing. Plato and Plutarch sought earnestly for the truth; but they continually complained of that obscurity, under which it was veiled; and through which they could not penetrate. * Plato tells the Athenians, that they would remain in a state of sleep for ever, if God did not out of pity send them an instructor. This state of uncertainty is finely described by Cicero. *I do not, says that excellent writer, suppose, that Arcesilas engaged in dispute with Zeno out of obstinacy, or a desire of superiority: but to shew that obscurity, under which all things lie, and which forced Socrates to a confession of his ignorance. And all those, who in a manner were enamoured with Socrates; such also as Democritus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and*

* In his Apology for Socrates.

almost

almost all the ancients, were reduced to the same confession. They all maintained, that no true insight could be acquired; nothing clearly perceived, or known: that our senses were limited, our intellect weak, and the course of man's life short. Hence according to Democritus, truth lay buried in the depths of the sea, or as some relate it,—in a well without a bottom: and consequently could never be discovered. Finally, they in general acknowledged, that universal darkness prevailed.*

The uncertainty, under which mankind laboured, is farther described by that moral poet Euripides in his *Hippolytus*: where he speaks of the misery and blindness of people in this world, and their doubts in respect to futurity—

The life of man is all a scene of care,
Which knows no intermission. When it's past,
Should there be any future bliss, it lies
In cloud, and dreary darkness, unreveal'd.
Yet we, too fondly led, by what we feel,
Prize the brief sunshine of this fleeting life,

* Academic Questions, p. 1062. b. Gronovii.

Anxious : because we have neither view, nor hope,
Of aught hereafter. Thus we darkling rove,
Amus'd with fables, and poetick dreams.

* Plutarch informs us of the acknowledged debility of human reason : and says, that in respect to truth, those, who had made it their chief study, confessed fairly, that it was difficult to be pursued, and more difficult to be obtained. For it comprehended things, as Empedocles observed—

† Which neither eye has seen, nor ear has heard,
Nor human mind conceiv'd.

‡ Another poet speaks of the short duration of man upon earth, during which he cannot attain to a true knowledge of either good, or evil ; so difficult are they to be precisely distinguished. This uncertainty led some persons to desperation : and of others it made atheists. Hence a man is introduced by Euripides, who declares his

• De Audiendis Poetis, p. 15. † Plutarch above, p. 17.
‡ Mimnermus in Stobæo.

diffidence by saying openly—* *Who art thou, Jupiter? for I know nothing of thee but by hearsay.*

The Want of a proper Remedy.

The first philosophers made noble efforts to establish some salutary doctrines: but they had no good foundation, upon which they could proceed. The Stoicks in particular observed, that there was a fitness and beauty in virtue, and recommended it strongly. But they were unable to ascertain its principles, and to maintain it unsophisticated: and therefore could never place it upon a proper basis. They were accordingly forced to make virtue its own reward: which did very well in theory, but was not sufficient for practice. Hence, when difficulties arose, their best disciples fell off, and were obliged to give up the cause. For they often saw virtue debased, and vice triumphant, and the worst cause contrary to seeming justice prevail. For

• Quoted by Justin Martyr, and Athenagoras.

this they could not account : nor had they any resources, to which they could apply. The consequence was doubt, and despair. Hence Cato slew himself, and Brutus followed his example*,—declaring, when he died, that he had followed virtue, as a reality, but found it a mere illusion. Such was the uncertainty, which prevailed among some of the most enlightened nations. All beyond was horror, gloom, and Stygian darkness.

In consequence of this mental obscurity, many, who admitted the immortality of the soul, seem to have rather held, that it did not immediately † die, than that it existed for ever. According to ‡ Seneca it could last only for a determined period : for a time was to come, when a general

* Dion Cass. l. xlvii. p. 525.

† Some said, that the soul was dissipated and lost : others that it remained for a time : others that it survived always. Cicero Tusc. Quæst. l. i. § 9. p. 1144. Again, p. 1151. § 31. It did not die with the body : but still was not immortal.

‡ Consolation ad Marciam, vol. i. p. 300. See Marcus Antoninus, l. xi. § 3.

conflagration

conflagration would take place, and all things be reduced to their primitive chaotic state. The region of departed souls was supposed to be beneath in the depths of the earth, where those, who had led a good life, had Elysium for their portion, and enjoyed bowers, shades, and fountains; and roved in meads of asphodel: and the wicked were consigned to punishment in Tartarus. But how permanent this situation was, those who maintained it, do not seem to have inquired. Besides, the opinion was founded on no authority; and accompanied with such extravagant fables, as no person of sound reason could admit. Hence many individuals, and some whole sects of philosophers, believed, that the soul perished with the body. This was unhappily maintained in some beautiful lines by Catullus—

The sun may set, and rise again: but we,
 Soon as our short-liv'd taper is extinct,
 Sink in a deep, and everlasting sleep,
 And no more wake to day.

The poet Moschus writes to the same purpose in his epitaph upon Bion—

Alas ! the mallow in the garden fair,
And herbs, and flowers, may fade : but they again
Rise up to life, and have their birth renew'd.
But we, the great, the powerful, and wise,
Soon as we sink oblivious ; there ensues
A deep, a deadly, ever-during sleep,
From whence we wake no more.

Hence Seneca in the *Troades* makes a person say—*There is nothing in death : and death itself is nothing.* And in Sallust we read to the same purpose the words of Julius Cæsar—*Death is a dissolution of all mortal evils. Beyond it there is no room for either happiness or care.*

This Uncertainty attended with a bad Influence on the Morals of Men : but rectified by Christianity.

This doctrine of a life hereafter, and of future rewards and punishments, being so obscurely made known, and so partially maintained, in the Gentile world, proved a
great

great discouragement to virtue, and an incentive to vice. But this defect was made up in the Christian system, which is founded upon these great truths, that there is a life after this, and a future resurrection; also an appointed season, when all men shall be tried for their works. Our Saviour therefore, that the resurrection from the dead might not be esteemed an ideal notion, put the proof of his mission upon his rising again. This he effected past all controversy, and became *the first fruits of them that slept*. Of this his disciples were eye witnesses: * *to whom he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*. St. Paul accordingly mentions to the Corinthians the certainty of the fact—*For I delivered to you first of all, that which I also received: how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures: and that he was buried; and that he rose again the third day,*

* Acts i. 3.

† 1 Corinth. xv. 3, &c.

according

according to the scriptures. And that he was seen of Cephas : then of the twelve. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once : of whom the greater part remain unto this present ; but some are fallen asleep. After this he was seen of James : then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also. Add to this the testimony of the Roman cohort, which must have consisted of no inconsiderable number of men. These guarded the sepulchre, and saw with amazement every circumstance of the resurrection ; and declared the whole to people in the city. This was matter of such notoriety, that it could not be contradicted. Peter therefore in his very first address to the * Jews presses home this argument of the resurrection, as a circumstance undeniable : and adds—† *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* And what was the consequence ? The Apostle

* Acts ii.

† v. 36.

tells us — *The same day there were added to the church, of these very persons, who had crucified Christ—about three thousand souls: and upon another day * five thousand. After this there came in from all parts † multitudes without number.*

• Acts iv. 4

† v. 14.

V.

A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN AND MOHAM- MEDAN RELIGIONS.

THE law of Moses is cancelled, and but imperfectly maintained. And as all other religions upon earth are idolatrous, excepting the Mohammedan, that only can be brought in competition with the religion of Christ. But it will be found to lose greatly by the contrast. For all, that it has good and laudable, is taken from the former : as there was no other source, from whence the impostor could borrow. He therefore drew largely : but blended the truths, which he treacherously purloined, with fictions of his own creating, and with a permit of sensual gratifications, which he adapted to the temper of the people, for whom he wrote. By this unnatural mixture

ture he purposed to ruin the religion, to which he was so much beholden : and in some degree succeeded.

He was born at Mecca, a city of Arabia, and lived, and wrote, about six hundred years after the death of Christ. He admits one God, the creator of all things : and allows him his most essential attributes. Hence we find this good to have arisen from evil ; that wherever his religion was propagated, all idolatrous worship has ceased. But then on the other hand the true religion has at the same time been exiled : and a large portion of the world been deprived of the light of the gospel. In consequence of this deprivation, science, and every liberal art, have been equally banished or depressed. He was acquainted with the scriptures : and mentions many of the patriarchs and prophets, as holy men, and shews a great respect to the character of Jesus Christ. He speaks of his miraculous powers, as well as those of his disciples, and particularly his raising of dead persons to life : Koran, p. 41, c. iii. and
he

he styles them evident * miracles. He describes him as the chief of all prophets, and the Logos, or Word of God, c. iii. p. 40. In one of his † chapters a curse is denounced against those, who do not believe in the history of Jesus, the son of Mary; and punishment both in this world and the world to come. He says also of the Deity, by whom Christ was sent into the world—*The words of thy Lord are perfect in truth and justice; there is none that can change his words.* C. vi. p. 110.

But, though he allows *these evident miracles* of our Saviour; yet he sets aside his doctrines, and substitutes his own in their room; though not ascertained by the least evidence of this kind. Our Saviour said to the Jews, ‡ *The works, which I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. § If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do; believe the works: that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in*

* Koran, C. xliii. p. 399. *When Jesus came with evident miracles, &c.*

† C. iii. p. 43, 44; and c. xix. p. 252.

‡ John x. 25.

§ John x. 37, 38.

me, and I in him. But Mohammed could make no such appeal. Miracles, he owns, were demanded, as a test of his calling; but he* tells us, that none were performed. We have nothing but his bare word for his mission.

Yet he tries to make void the religion of Christ: though, as we have before seen, he allowed him to have been a true† prophet, and the divine Logos, who was sent by the Deity. This is plain from his own words, for he makes the Deity declare to the world,—
 ‡ *Verily Christ, the son of Mary, is the apostle of God, and his Word, which he conveyed unto Mary.* § *We gave unto Jesus, the son of Mary, manifest signs; and we strengthened him with the Holy Spirit.* And, he says also, that God was *true*, and his word *immutable*. Yet he denies, that Christ was the son of || God, though Christ, *strengthened with the Holy Spirit*, declared it: and the *God of truth* gave assurances of it, when

* K. c. xvii. p. 236. c. lxxiv. p. 473. n. Particularly c. vi. p. 110. c. xxxvii. p. 371.

† C. iii. p. 40.

‡ C. iv. p. 80, and 89.

§ C. ii. p. 30

|| C. ix. p. 153. C. v. p. 85.

he said—* *This is my beloved son.* These failures, and contradictions, ruin the whole of the Impostor's system. He did not consider, that he granted too much. Hence upon Mohammed's own principles nobody can be a rational Mohammedan.

The same will be the result of his doctrines, which differ essentially from the precepts of the Gospel. The notions, which he endeavours to inspire, have nothing pure, and spiritual, but on the contrary are base, foul, and sensual: and the gratifications, which he promises, in the world to come, are equally sensual, and base. We are told by our Saviour in the scriptures, that a man is to be the husband of one wife; and that there is to be an inseparable union † between them. He was by Mohammed's confession a prophet of the true God, and the Holy Spirit was with him. Yet in the Koran we find a permit for any person to have four wives, and as many concubines as he can maintain. Our Saviour enjoins a mental purity, and a spiritual sacrifice, to-

* Matthew iii. 17.

† Matt. xix. 5.

gether

gether with a rational worship: of which no notice is taken in the Alcoran. The chief duty of a Mussulman consists in external ablutions, and stated repetitions of prayer, with some appointed ceremonies: in which no spiritual, nor rational, service is to be found. Such service was unknown to the pretended lawgiver, whose views were all base and worldly: and these he extends even to the life to come. Our Saviour expressly tells us, that at the resurrection—
** They will neither marry nor be given in marriage: but be like the angels of God in heaven.* We are moreover informed, that we shall be changed, and have a spiritual and glorified body: *† for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven: neither can corruption inherit incorruption.* But Mohammed gives a different account. And though Mr. Sale would fain palliate the base notions of this impostor‡, yet it is manifest from his own confession, that the happiness promised by Mohammed, consisted in base and corporeal enjoyments.

* Matt. xxii. 30.
and 50.

† 1 Corinth. xv. 42, 43.

‡ Preliminary Discourse.

How worldly his views were, may be seen in the following quotations—* *For him, who dreadeth the tribunal of God, are prepared two gardens—planted with shady trees: in each of them two fountains flowing; and of every fruit two kinds. They shall repose on couches, the lining of which shall be of thick silk, interwoven with gold: and the fruit of the garden shall be near at hand to gather. Therein shall receive them beauteous damsels, whom no man hath deflowered before them, nor any Genius, having complexions like rubies and pearls. Besides these shall be two other gardens of a dark green: in each of them shall be two fountains pouring forth plenty of water. In each of them shall be fruits and palms, and pomegranates. In them shall be agreeable and beautiful damsels, having fine black eyes, and kept in pavilions from public view—Therein shall they delight themselves, lying upon green cushions and beautiful carpets.*

There will not only be marriage; but also servitude in the next world, according

* Koran, c. lv. p. 433.

to this prophet*. The very meanest in paradise will have eighty thousand servants and seventy-two wives of the girls of paradise: besides the wives he had in this world†. Also—a tent erected for him of pearls, hyacinths, and emeralds. And as marriage will take place, so a new race will be introduced in heaven, as we are assured by the same writer. *If any of the faithful in paradise be desirous of issue, it shall be conceived, born, and grown up, in the space of an hour‡.*

We may well suppose, that the life of Mohammed corresponded with his doctrines: and he will be accordingly found devoted to the most sensual gratifications, both in theory and practice. He did not wait for the supposed completion of them in heaven, but indulged at large in this world: and said, that he had a dispensation from God to indulge more than others, and to trespass even within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity. § *O, prophet, we*

* Prelim. Discourse, p. 98.

† Ibid. p. 99.

‡ Ibid. p. 99.

§ Koran, c. xxxiii. p. 348.—See also p. 349, concerning the privileges granted him in respect to women and wives.

have allowed thee thy wives, unto whom thou hast given their dower: and also the slaves, which thy right hand possesseth: and the daughters of thy uncle on thy father's side, and on thy mother's side; and any believing woman.—This is the peculiar privilege, which is granted to thee above the rest of the true believers.

His falshood, and treachery, were equal to his other vices: for which we have his own evidence. We are told by Moses*, *that God is not a man, that He should lie: and He is universally stiled the God of all truth.* Even Mohammed describes him as a deity of truth and justice, whose decrees are unalterable. Yet he in another place blasphemously makes Him an abettor of the greatest falshood, and says, that he had received from God a dispensation for perjury.—† *God hath allowed you a dissolution of your oaths.*

There are some other essential articles, which make a great difference between the character and doctrines of our blessed Sa-

* Numbers xxiii. 19.

† C. lxvi. p. 456.

viour, and those of the Arabian prophet. The whole tenour of the life of Christ was love, charity, and good-will towards man, which were attended with repeated exhortations to peace. God is stiled the God of peace—* and *the kingdom of God joy and peace*—and † *the fruit of the Spirit is joy, love and peace*—‡ *Follow peace with all men*. But these virtues were quite unknown to Mohammed. Yet he gave out, that he was the Paraclete §, or Comforter, promised in the gospel. But such a comforter the world never before, nor since, beheld. For he made himself the bane of all happiness, being through his whole life involved in wars and bloodshed. And this curse he entailed upon his followers throughout all generations ||: so far was he from meekness, long-suffering, and from affording the comforts of peace. In the ninth chapter of the Koran he mentions some months, in which he would not have

* Romans xiv. 17. † Galat. v. 22. ‡ Heb. xii. 14.

§ Koran, C. lxi. p. 449. See notes.

|| C. v. p. 84. C. viii. p. 146. C. xlvii. p. 409.

his people make war. * *But when these months shall be past, kill the idolaters, wherever ye shall find them: and take them prisoners, wherever ye shall find them: and besiege them, and lay wait for them in every convenient place.* In another place he says—† *Attack the idolaters in all the months, &c.—‡ When ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads, until ye have made great slaughter of them: and bind them in bonds.—Whoso fighteth for God's true religion, God will not suffer his works to perish.* Mr. Sale mentions this injunction of § waring against infidels, which is repeated in several passages of the Koran, and declared to be of high merit in the fight of God. Those, who were slain fighting in defence of the faith being reckoned martyrs; and promised immediate admission into paradise. This duty is greatly magnified by the Mohammedan divines, who call the sword the key to heaven and hell||.

This

* C. ix. p. 149. † C. ix. p. 154. ‡ C. xlvii. p. 409. 410. § Prelim. Disc. p. 142.

|| Mr. Sale afterwards, p. 143, very incautiously, and very injuriously (not to say worse) compares this law of Mohammed with the command given by God to the Israelites in their journey to Canaan. He says, that *they had an extensive*

This is very contrary to the spirit of the gospel. God is indeed stiled *the Lord of hosts*: and there is a promise, that he would *go forth with the armies of Israel*, when they were unjustly invaded. But still peace was the great object even in war: and the Lord was esteemed *the God of peace*. * *He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth: he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder. He burneth the chariot with fire.* † *The Lord will bless his people with peace.* ‡ *I will give peace unto the land.* § *For the end of the upright man is peace.* || *The work of the righteous shall be peace.* ** *The paths of wisdom are peace.* The wish and prayer of the royal Psalmist were—*† *Scatter thou the people who delight in war.* Yet he was himself a great warrior, and a man highly acceptable to the Deity. Yet so hateful

extensive and explicit commission to attack, subdue, and destroy, all, who were enemies to their religion. Whereas the command was limited to the nations, who were their enemies, and had injured them: such as the Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, exclusive of the people of Canaan. But of this I shall say more at the conclusion.

* Psalm xlv. 9. † Ps. xxix. 11. ‡ Levit. xxvi. 6.
 § Ps. xxxvii. 37. || Isaiah xxxii. 17. ** Prov. iii. 17.
 *† Ps. lxviii. 30.

was war in the fight of the Almighty, that he would not suffer this excellent person to build him a temple, because he had been engaged in that horrid process. * *Then David the king stood up—and said—I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord. But God said unto me: Thou shalt not build an house for my name: because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood.*

These were the principles, which prevailed under the first dispensation, which was only preparatory for a better. When the latter succeeded, the virtues of love and charity, even to our enemies, were more strongly enforced. Then were the words of the Psalmist fulfilled—† *Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness, and peace, have kissed each other.* Under the second great lawgiver a more pure and spiritual religion took place: and charity, love, and peace, are universally enjoined. We are forbidden not only to do evil, but even to conceive it: and to avoid all bitterness, and

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 2, 3.

† Psalm lxxxv. 10.

revenge, even towards our enemies. We are to abstain from all retaliation, except such as justice demands: and even that justice is to be mitigated, as far as reason and religion, and public security will permit.

Religion will always have an effect upon the minds of men; and the happy consequences will be uniformly in proportion to its excellence.

Such then is the superiority of the Christian religion over that of Mohammed, which I have used only as a foil to set off the purity and brightness of the former. The contrast is wonderful, and has been finely displayed by the very excellent bishop Sherlock, in his ninth sermon: with whose words I shall conclude this chapter.—*Should we say, that the Alcoran was not promulged to us by persons duly commissioned, it may be perhaps answered, that the Alcoran is as well published to us, as the Gospel is to them (that is, it comes to us as well authenticated) which has some appearance of an answer; though the fact is indeed otherwise: for even the Alcoran owns Jesus for a true prophet.*
But

But with respect to this instance I persuade myself, it can be no very distracting study to determine our choice. Go to your natural religion: lay before her Mahomet, and his disciples arrayed in armour, and in blood; riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands, who fell by his victorious sword. Shew her the cities, which he set in flames: the countries which he ravaged, and destroyed: and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of earth. When she has viewed him in this scene, carry her into his retirements. Shew her the prophet's chamber; his concubines, and wives. Let her see his adultery; and hear him alledge Revelation, and a divine commission, to justify his lust, and his oppression. When she is tired with this prospect, then shew her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men: patiently instructing both the ignorant and perverse. Let her see him in his most retired privacies: let her follow him to the mount; and hear his devotions, and supplications to God. Carry her to his table, to view his homely fare; and hear his heavenly discourses. Let her see him injured, but not provoked. Let her attend him to the tribunal,

nal, and consider the patience, with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his cross; and let her view him in the agony of death: and hear his last prayer for his persecutors—Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.

When natural religion has viewed both; ask, Which is the prophet of God? But her answer we have already had; when she saw part of this scene through the eyes of the centurion, who attended at the cross. By him she spoke, and said—Truly this man was the Son of God.

VI. SOME

VI.

SOME POPULAR OBJECTIONS,
AND OTHER ARTICLES,
CONSIDERED.*Of Difficulties, and mysterious Truths.*

IT has been objected to the gospel, that it contains many things, which are hard to be conceived : and some which seem contrary to reason. And it is undoubtedly attended with difficulties ; otherwise there would have been no occasion for teachers, and interpreters. But though there may be some things above reason ; yet there will never be found any, which are contrary. And even the difficulties, upon a due examination of the context, often vanish : and shew, that the fault is not in the doctrine, but in our own want of apprehension.

sion. Many articles in what we stile natural religion are equally difficult to be explained. For instance, we see often vice triumphant, and virtue depressed ; for which we cannot account from any light of nature, nor from the religion supposed to be founded upon it : as that system can afford neither reason nor remedy, both which are to be obtained from Revelation. The like occurs in natural philosophy. We find it abound with phænomena, which we see and know, but cannot * explain. It is certain, if we may trust to the best writers upon the subject, that the objects received by the eye are inverted. How comes it then, that they appear uniformly erect, and in their proper position ? How can we account for this contrariety ? Add to this, that the eyes of a man, being twofold, receive constantly a double impression, and represent two objects. How comes it, that the same person experimentally sees but one ? People have laboured to solve the difficulty : but those very labours shew that

(* For instance, gravity, magnetism, and electricity. /

Hence we find that
 the fight is attended with seem-
 ingly no advantage to any person had prophe-
 cy, or the great phi-
 losophers, that vision would one
 day be attained by art ; and
 the power of improving fight would
 be obtained only directly between
 the eyes. they must have
 the power of his senses. And
 the other way was—
 to look at it, but
 in different direc-
 tions. Had learned men have
 years of improvement ?
 by their desires, by
 that fight would
 be the result. and that the
 result was to look
 at all an-
 thing like a telescope,
 as body does in-
 to the object.
 the fight
 of no de-
 and fight
 greatly

greatly benefited : and when once known, the whole is found consonant to reason as well as experience.

If then we meet with many things in common life, and worldly science, which seem difficult to comprehend, and some beyond our reason ; we must expect to find others above our reason in that grand system of life and immortality, which Providence has laid before us. And it is our duty to acquiesce ; and trust to the word of God, which cannot deceive.

Concerning Scruples and Difficulties, which obtrude themselves after Conviction.

When we are certified of the authenticity of the scriptures ; and are fully convinced, that the Christian religion is true, and of divine original, we must guard against any subsequent impediments ; such as the sacred writers call *stumbling-blocks*, and *rocks of offence*. If there should occur any thing, which we do not comprehend, it should be passed by without any undue hesitation. For we must not suffer, what we do not know, to come in competition with that
which

which we do. Ignorance must never be put in a balance against knowledge ; nor uncertainty against manifest proof : for who would weigh a shadow against a substance ? The scriptures, as I have often mentioned, are of a curious texture : and, if carefully examined, will often by the context solve the seeming difficulties, which arise, and explain themselves. Besides, much must be left for future investigation : for though the mine is rich and inexhaustible : yet the ore is not always superficial. It therefore requires both labour and time to arrive at that, which lies deep. We must not therefore be discouraged in our pursuits, though the truth may not be immediately obvious.

I have high authority for this mode of reasoning ; which, I hope, I may take the liberty to produce. When a Great Personage some years ago was visiting her Royal Nursery, a most amiable * Princess, who was at that time about six years old, ran with a book in her hand, and tears in her

* Her Royal Highness the Princess Mary.

eyes,

eyes, and said—*Madam, I cannot comprehend it ; I cannot comprehend it.* Her Majesty, with true parental affection, looked upon the Princess, and told her not to be alarmed. *What you cannot comprehend to-day, you may comprehend to-morrow : and what you cannot attain to this year, you may arrive at the next. Do not therefore be frightened with little difficulties : but attend to what you do know, and the rest will come in time.* This is a golden rule ; and well worthy of our observation.

Many articles which seem complicated, and enveloped, will in due season, by an easy and spontaneous evolution, unfold themselves ; and appear obvious to the understanding. When therefore we are confirmed in our faith, and convinced of the great and essential truths of the gospel, we should not yield to idle surmises : nor let our ignorance get the superiority of our knowledge. On the contrary we should stand firm, and wait with patience, if haply new light may break in, and this darkness be removed. But suppose it to be in some instances permanent : what signifies a little

P

remote

remote shade and obscurity to those, who enjoy the brightness of day? Even to the last there will be some things, to which human wisdom in this life cannot attain.

The Christian System said to be too local and partial.

Many serious persons have thought it unaccountable, that the Christian religion, if it be so excellent, should *want universality*. Hence undue scruples have sometimes arisen to the prejudice of their faith, and peace of mind. This objection is couched in terms, which are liable to mislead; for when we are told, that *it wants*, &c. we are led to infer, that there is a defect in the system; and that it fails in some material article. Whereas the excellence of its doctrines does not depend upon time, or place; but is the same, whether limited, or extended. Light is light, whether confined in a sepulchral monument; or diffused through the whole solar system. If then we properly state the objection, it amounts only to this, that Christianity is not universally admitted; and therefore, as it is intimated,

mated, and feared, not of divine original. But knowledge, wisdom, justice, truth, love, charity, are not universal: yet they are divine qualities, and heavenly attributes. Their excellence is not to be measured by their reception among men; nor made to depend upon the folly, and blindness of the world. The great Author of our religion said from the beginning, that it would not be generally received. He compared it *to a treasure hid in a field: to a grain of mustard-seed*, which in time would grow up to a tree: also *to leaven hid in a large quantity of meal*, by which the whole was in due time to be leavened, and improved. But at what period the completion of his great purpose was to be effected, he did not disclose. The work of Providence is however going on: and the religion of Christ will always be found excellent, however overlooked, and despised by the ignorant, and worldly. Its worth does not depend upon the prejudices, and misconceptions of mankind. What is extraordinary, those who principally condemn it for want of universality,

fality, are the very persons, who impede its progress.

Concerning Exceptions unduly made to particular Terms, and Modes of Expression.

Every nation has its peculiar manner of expression: and the Jews, and all the oriental nations, were very luxuriant, and bold, in their tropes and figures. We must not therefore make any exception to the strong terms, which occur in the sacred writings; as they are to be found in all the languages of that part of the world, and they are not unfrequent in our own. Our Saviour says, that *it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*. By this, which was probably proverbial, is meant only, that riches are attended with much danger, and render the reception of the Gospel very difficult: for a rich man, who had all the requisites to be his disciple, refused it; because he could not give up his wealth, to which he was devoted. In another place he assures his disciples, that if they *had faith*
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as a grain of mustard-seed, they might remove mountains. By this is signified, that those, who were blessed with a small degree of true faith, might perform wonderful things. The woman of Samaria says to her people concerning Christ—*Come and see a man, which told me all things, that ever I did.* These were the words of amazement, upon her recollecting the secret articles made known to her, which she thought could never have been disclosed. It is said of God's church, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* This may seem a strange expression. But in old time the elders of cities sat in the evening at the gates to hear complaints, and to redress wrongs. Hence by the gates of the city was meant the council of the place. *Execute judgment in your gate.* Zech. viii. 16. *Her husband is known in the gate.* Prov. xxxi. 23. *Wisdom crieth in the openings of the gates.* Prov. i. 20, 21. Instead of *gate* we sometimes use *house* for a grand council. We say—*the house of commons met.* *The house of lords decreed.* And we also speak of *the house of convocation.* In doing this we take

as great a liberty, as they, who use *gate*. Some of these expressions seem to have been proverbial: as when, upon the repeated Hosannas of the multitude, our Saviour says to his disciples—*If these should bold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out*. By this he signified to them, that after such signal marks of his goodness, and manifestation of his power, it was impossible for the people not to testify their admiration. It is said of Solomon, that *all the world sought to hear his wisdom*. A decree was given *for all the world to be taxed*.—*Behold all the world is gone after him*. The like expressions occur in our own language, and in the languages of our neighbours. We say of an assembly—*all the world was there*:—also, *I have searched all the world over*.—*There is not such another in the whole world*. In these instances the sense is never taken in the wide extent of the words. And in the other examples they are to be understood with a proper limitation: as the words are only designed by an hyperbole to enhance and enforce what is said. In the scriptures *by the whole world or earth* was often

often meant a very limited portion. It sometimes comprehended the Roman empire ; at other times the region about Judea. It is often confined to the land of Israel : and even to the multitude at Jerufalem. *The whole world is gone out to meet him.* The words *ever* and *everlasting* are many times to be taken with the like allowances ; as in the following instances. *I will give the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. To thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.—A settled place to abide in for ever.—The land that I gave thee for ever and ever.* By these expressions, however strong, we are to understand merely a gift comparatively, and conditionally, permanent : a blessing of long * duration. The Grecians expressed themselves in the same manner, and also the Roman writers : and we likewise at this day use the same form of † words.

* In Seneca the word *æternus* is used for *diuturnus*, as Dr. Jortin has justly observed. Discourses upon the Truth of Christianity, p. 265.

† Thus we say — *To him and his heirs for ever.*

*Concerning the hasty Decision in respect to
Consequences.*

We should likewise take great care never to be imposed upon by false appearances: nor to place to the account of Christianity any of those evils, which ensued in after times from its false votaries. Cruel persecutions prevailed, and long, and bloody wars were carried on under the pretext of religion, and out of honour to the Cross. But war and cruelty must not be attributed to Christianity, which breathes nothing but peace and charity: and enjoins meekness, and submission and long forbearance. They were corrupted from pride, and were carried on by apostates and semi-pagans: who knew not the genius, nor temper of Christianity, nor the character of the Founder: who tried to maintain their cause by the very means which tended to ruin it. There is no evil existing under heaven, which may not be applied and perverted. But we must not make any good gift for an evil, which is its opposite: but arises merely out of abuse. Law may be strained to protect

protect knaves : the church may shelter sacrilege : sanctity give birth to hypocrisy ; and honour afford sanction to murder. So religion has been made a pretence for the like bad purposes : and discord, rapine, slaughter, and all the fatal consequences of war, have been imputed to Christianity. But the allegation is false and injurious : for they arose from another source, from a depraved, and adulterated system, which grew up in the room of the true religion, and was productive of all this mischief. The law of truth still remains ; and has from its first promulgation subsisted in the writings of the evangelists, and apostles, however we may have departed from it. There it is at this day to be seen : and the very essence of it, next to our duty to God, is love, charity, and forgiveness to one another. We must not attribute to Christianity the origin of any evil ; any more than impute to the sun the production of darkness.

In opposition to this I may be asked, if Christ did not openly declare, that these evils would be the certain consequences of his religion : and that he should himself
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bring war, and desolation upon the world. This affords an opportunity of shewing, that what appears to some an inexplicable difficulty, and a stumbling-block not to be surmounted, may be found after due consideration perfectly consonant to reason, and truth. It may farther teach us, how much it behoves us to be upon our guard; and not suffer our faith to be affected, though some things should appear not quite agreeable to our notions. The passage, to which people in their inferences have alluded, is in the tenth chapter of St. Matthew, and the 34th verse. *Think not, that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword.* This has been laid hold of by unbelievers, and even by believers noticed with a kind of alarm; as if the passage related to the religion of Christ. It has often been mentioned with an air of great concern, as—*a prophecy too fully completed—a melancholy truth, which has been verified through all ages—a fatal mischief which operates at this day.* But there seems to be no occasion for any fears on one side, as there are no grounds for the imputations
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on the other: for if I mistake not, the passage has been improperly rendered, and totally misunderstood.

Our Saviour does not allude to the system, which he was to establish; nor does he make any mention of religion, much less of any consequences, which were to ensue from it. He is speaking of himself, and alludes to those evils, which would necessarily be brought upon the Jewish nation for their manifold sins, and their rejection of the Messiah. His words therefore by no means relate to the world in general, nor to any distant time; but to the land in which he resided, and the age in which he lived. The true version would be—Think not that I am *come to send peace upon this* land: I came not to send peace, but a sword.* The whole of this tenth chapter is taken up with an address of our Saviour

* It is to be observed by those, who are no strangers to the original, that the words are, *ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν*. They are introduced in the very same sense Ezekiel xxxiii. 3. *Καὶ ἰδὴ τὴν ἐρμῆναιαν ἐρχομένην ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν. Behold a sword coming upon the land.* *Καὶ ἐκαλῶσι λιμοὶ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν.* Psalm cv. 16. *Καὶ ἐγενήθη λιμὸς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.* Gen. xii. 10. *Καὶ Ἀλλοφυλοὶ ἐπέθῃτο ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν.* 1 Sam. xxiii. 27. Many other examples might be brought, if it were necessary.

to his apostles, whom he had just at that instant collected. And in this discourse he tries to wean them of their prejudices about worldly honours, and advantages, and of ease and peace in life; and to let them know, what they were to suffer for his sake. *Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* He then enumerates the many evils, to which they would be liable; and warns them never to forsake their faith, nor to entertain any wrong notions of his purposes, and to guard against worldly views: for they were to be persecuted of all men for his sake. He then adds the passage above:—*Think not that I am come to send peace upon this land.* The apostles, and disciples, could not help looking forward with views towards a temporal kingdom. They were persuaded, as he was the Messiah Prince, foretold by the prophets, that in consequence of it he would erect his throne at Jerusalem; and that an everlasting reign of peace and glory would ensue. And though our blessed Saviour in this chapter, and elsewhere, taught them a different

ferent doctrine; and mentioned particularly, that his kingdom was not of this world; and that he, who would be his disciple, must take up his cross, and follow him: yet their prejudices still prevailed. Even St. Peter, when Christ gave some intimation of his death, cried out—*Far be it from thee, O Lord.* At the very time when our Saviour was ascending up to Jerusalem, and in a few days was to suffer upon the cross, his disciples were disputing, *who should be greatest in his kingdom.* And still farther, when he appeared to them after his resurrection, the first question was—*Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* Acts i. 6.

The Disciples of Christ, so far from co-operating in a Fraud, did not know the Scheme which he was carrying on.

From hence we may perceive, how little they understood * the purpose of their mas-

* *These things understood not his disciples at the first.* John xii. 16. *They understood not that saying.* Mark ix. 32. *They understood none of these things.* Luke xviii. 34. See also Luke ii. 50. John viii. 27.—x. 6.

ter. He was sensible, that his words would not have an immediate effect: yet there was a time to come, when they would be brought to their remembrance by the Holy Spirit, and would then have their due weight. He therefore persists in informing them, that they must not expect peace, either private or publick. *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father: and the daughter against her mother: and the daughter in law against the mother in law: and a man's foes shall be of his own household.* This declaration, and these subsequent dissensions, related to that age only, in which the gospel was to be first preached. And of these dissensions Christ was to be the *innocent cause*: for who can without blasphemy suppose him the real author of evil? They could not relate to remote times; nor to those religious feuds, which were carried on in different parts of the world many centuries afterwards. There was in those later times no such want of union in families. Cities agreed, and provinces co-operated, nay, whole kingdoms were unanimous to carry on in God's
name

name the most unnatural, and destructive wars: all which have been impiously represented, as the effects of Christianity. And to this purpose our Saviour's words have been mistakenly quoted. But he was warning his disciples of partial family divisions, which would soon in that age ensue upon their preaching of the Gospel. For as the doctrines were new, they would not have an equal effect upon all of the same family. And as a prejudice in favour of parents, and relations, was natural, but might be attended with fatal consequences towards those, who were otherwise ready to embrace the gospel; our Saviour at his first setting out warns his disciples, and all who were willing to be admitted into his fold, of their danger: and immediately proceeds with telling them, that they must guard against all prejudice, and partiality.—*He that loveth father, or mother, more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that loveth son, or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me.* We may perceive plainly, that the whole

whole address of our Saviour to his apostles relates to the time, when the gospel was to be first preached; and to the troubles, and difficulties, with which it would be attended. And when he mentions, that he was not come to *send* (after his death) *peace upon the land, but a sword*; our Saviour, as may be seen by the context, alludes to the approaching war of the Romans, and to the ruin of Jerusalem: which with all its calamities he foretells at large. He then mentions those unavoidable divisions, which would take place among people of the same family: as some would receive the gospel, and others perish in their unbelief. He therefore admonishes his disciples to hold their duty to him dearer, than any worldly friendship, and connexion. They were to break through all ties for his sake, and to flee away from the approaching evils: for he would bring a sword upon the land; and the peace, which they expected, would not be their portion. This will explain a passage, which has been thought difficult, in another chapter to the same purpose. Matt. xxiv. 34. Our Saviour had told his disciples—

ples—*This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled.* And he farther intimated, that his words would have weight : for those, who were wise, would certainly withdraw themselves at the crisis. In consequence of this there would be a separation between people occupied in the very same operation, to the salvation of the one part, and the ruin of the other.—*Then shall two men be in the field : the one shall be taken, and the other left, or preserved. Two women shall be grinding at the mill : the one shall be taken, and the other left, or be saved.* All this relates to divisions in families, and societies in respect to Christ, and his gospel : when one part would be taken off by the sword, and the other excepted, and preserved, by timely withdrawing from the approaching evil. It is very remarkable, that Josephus in his history of the war, and the siege of Jerusalem, mentions the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zelots, and other sects, and the tumults and seditions, which prevailed at that calamitous season : but not one word occurs of any Christian being engaged in them.

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Notwithstanding these cautions and denunciations, his disciples could not for a long time comprehend the truths, which were commended to them; nor believe, either that their Lord should suffer, or that their city would be ruined. In this manner I have endeavoured to explain this particular portion of scripture; which seems to have been misapplied greatly: and in consequence of it many improper and fatal inferences have been made, to the prejudice of true religion.

Some Observations upon the unpromising Means, by which the grand Scheme of the Gospel was effected.

And here, in way of corollary, let us look back and consider the means, by which our Saviour thought proper to carry on his scheme of the gospel. And his first operation was to send out twelve, whom it was to be prophesied that they should be upon the first fruits of the harvest who were to be reaped in this grand operation, and that they would be sent forth as sheep among wolves:

wolves: that they would be brought before councils, and kings, for his name sake; and be scourged, and otherwise persecuted: that many of them would be alienated from their most dear connexions; and make those their foes, who were of the same household. And he intimates, that after a life of tribulation, and sufferings, they were at last to take up their cross, and follow him. This seems to have been a strange invitation to those, whom he wanted to make his friends; and very unpromising means to recommend, and carry on, any purpose. However the great scheme was carried on by those very persons, who forsook him, and denied him, and, as we have seen above, during his life could never comprehend his meaning: yet at last brought the gospel system to perfection. This may appear a strange paradox: yet it was verified in every article.

In this Process there could be no Fallacy.

And here I must observe to those, who like Jordano Bruno, and other infidels, think the whole of Christianity to have
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been

been a fiction, and the founder of it a deceiver ; that the deceit must have been the most extraordinary, that ever was imposed upon the world. No impostor ever formed a scheme, that was not to be discovered till after his death. Our Saviour at this rate went through a life of trouble, want, and persecution, to carry on a design, from which no emolument could ensue ; and which was to be brought to light after his decease, by persons, who were not acquainted with it : and who were knowingly to undergo the same persecutions. He told the people—that *the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests : but the Son of man had not where to lay his head.* All this he underwent, and much more, to recommend a cause, which seemed afterwards to have died with him ; when his disciples forsook him, and fled ; and had neither means, nor knowledge, to prosecute the purposed system. How then was it effected ? for that it was fully compleated, we are witnesses at this day. I answer—Not by human means ; but by the assistance promised by our Saviour, through which only it could be made known

known and promoted. He accordingly says to his apostles, who did not comprehend his purpose—*These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.*

John xiv. 25, 26. When therefore our Saviour appeared to them soon after his resurrection, he bade them remain in Jerusalem, and *wait for the promise of the Father*, which was the gift of the Holy Spirit. They were then to *be endued with power from on high*, Luke xxiv. 49. Accordingly upon the feast of Pentecost, when they met in full assembly, the Holy Ghost came upon them with an ample effusion: and they were gifted with that salutary knowledge, to which they were before strangers; and with the gift of tongues, by which they were enabled to convey it to the most distant countries. By these means the Gospel of Christ soon triumphed over the learning of Greece and Rome, and the ignorance of other nations. These were two formi-

dable obstacles, which could not but by a miracle be surmounted.

In this manner were the prejudices of these excellent persons removed: and there is reason to believe, from good authority, that even during the short ministry of the apostles, and their * disciples, the gospel of Christ crucified was known from Gades to the Ganges; that is, according to the language of the times, to the ends of the world. The finger of God was manifest through the whole of this process. Among the many evidences in favour of the gospel, its purity, and excellence above all others, prove its divine original. Next to these is to be considered its wonderful progress. As it was too sublime for human wit to devise; so it was too difficult to be carried into execution by any human power. Lastly, let us look upon the instruments, by which it was under Providence promoted;—a set of illiterate and ignoble Galileans, who had nothing but their integrity to recommend them: who had no abilities to frame the

* I mean the first century.

system;

system; and entertained every prejudice to defeat it: who, having been disappointed in their views of peace, happiness, and honour in this life, were by a divine influence led to encounter pain, poverty, and shame, for the sake of the gospel, which had been made known to them by inspiration; and at last to lay down their lives, as a proof of their faith and attachment.

Observations upon Part of the Eighth Chapter of Judges; and some other Portions of Scripture, which are connected with it.

The passage, to which I allude, is where the children of Israel offer the sovereign rule to Gideon; which he refuses both for himself, and his son after him: and tells them, *The Lord shall rule over you*, ver. 23. We are likewise informed in the book of Samuel, that the people petitioned for a king; which displeased the prophet of the Lord: and their request was looked upon as very sinful. 1 Sam. viii. 5. A political writer, in a late popular * treatise, has from

* Common Sense, p. 13, &c.

these passages endeavoured to shew, that all royalty is abominable: that *it was introduced into the world by the heathens—and the most prosperous invention the devil ever set on foot for the promotion of Idolatry.* He says, that *monarchy is ranked in the scriptures as one of the sins of the Jews: for which a curse in reserve is denounced against them.* He then quotes the whole process of the people with the prophet Samuel; and makes several deductions from this history, the chief of which I know not how to admit. That the people sinned is manifest: but that monarchy was odious in the sight of God, and invented by the devil, is a most unwarrantable conclusion. Yet he insists, that *these portions of scripture are direct, and positive. They admit of no equivocal construction. That the Almighty hath here entered his protest against monarchical governments is true: or the scripture is false,* p. 19. This is a terrible alternative, and very alarming: but I hope after all, that we may free ourselves from this dilemma, and shew that these opposite articles can by no means be inferred from the text. The objection is founded in
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in the most gross misapprehension of the scriptures, and ignorance of the plain purport of the passages to which he alludes. He then says—*To the evil of monarchy we have added that of hereditary succession: and as the first is a degradation and lessening of ourselves; so the second, claimed as matter of right, is an insult, and an imposition on posterity.* Such are the sentiments of this sprightly writer: who has assisted abroad in forming a democracy, and it has been completed to his wish. He does not however stop here, as may be seen by his inveteracy to all kingly rule; which he tries to prove from scripture to have been a base, diabolical, system, contrary to the ordinances of God, and abominable in his sight.

But the whole is a great mistake: and he has founded his argument upon passages, which he did not sufficiently consider; and which in every instance militate against his opinion. And this I mention to shew, how far this politician has been misled by prejudice; and how much jealousy and fixed hatred have darkened his mind. Kingly
rule

rule was so far from being abhorred by God, and reputed an abomination, that it was instituted among the Israelites by his command, and upheld in an hereditary series by his authority. It was told them, before they were constituted a nation, that they should one day have a king. And they were ordered not to choose *one from among the heathen*: nor indeed to choose at all. *Thou shalt in any wise* (that is, by all means) *set him, (that person) king over thee, whom the Lord, thy God, shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee.* Then the duties of the king are mentioned, which he was carefully to fulfil—to the end that he may prolong his days in the kingdom, he and his children after him. Duet. xvii. 15, 16—20. By which is intimated an hereditary succession. After that the Israelites were settled in the land of promise, they were for a long time governed only by Judges. The first overture towards a change in their constitution was, after a signal victory, made to Gideon, whom they requested to be their king. But he nobly refused their offer, and—*said unto them,*

them, I will not rule over you; neither shall my sons rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you. Judges viii. 23 *. He answered wisely: for the Israelitish government was a Theocracy, and God *was king in Jeshurun*. Hence nobody would take upon him rule, unless it were delegated to him by the Deity. At last, in the time of Samuel, the Israelites applied to that prophet, and begged, that he would appoint them a king: for they did not presume to choose one themselves, but said, *Now make us a king to judge us, like all the nations.* 1 Samuel viii. 5. They had lived in an unsettled and precarious state for a very long time; and found the necessity of having some one superior to all the rest; by whose authority they might be more completely conducted. Their request was well founded: the only fault was, that they did not wait the time appointed, but anticipated the good purposes of the Deity: who knew their necessities, before they asked, and had appointed a remedy. The prophet was griev-

• His son soon after him set up for himself, and assumed royalty; but he was not long after ignominiously slain.

ed at their demand; because they appeared to be dissatisfied with his conduct. *But the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee; but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.* In consequence of this, Samuel, by divine appointment, pitched upon Saul for this high office: and anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord, and afterwards produced him before all the people. *And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen.* Ch. x. 24. Thus the people made their request: but God appointed. Hence the kings were stiled the Lord's anointed, and esteemed the substitutes of God; and their persons and characters held sacred. David was persecuted by Saul, and in continual danger of his life. Yet when he had him at a great advantage, he would not hurt him, nor suffer his eager companion to do him any injury. *And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?—The Lord forbid, that I should stretch*

stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed. 1 Samuel xxvi. 9, 11.

So far was God from abhorring kingly rule, or monarchy, that he ordained it for the people of Israel; and afterwards confirmed it. In consequence of this it was attended with his blessing. For the people, who had been for some centuries in a contemptible state, and in a course of vassalage by turns to all their neighbours, became at once a very respectable nation: and so early as the reign of the second prince, they held all these neighbouring people in subjection. They were all tributary to David. *The Lord preserved David whithersoever he went.* 2 Samuel viii. 6. And he vouchsafed to assure him, that he would farther bless him in his successors. *I will raise up thy seed after thee, that shall be of thy sons: and I will establish his kingdom: his throne shall be for evermore.* 1 Chron. xvii. 11. 14. *And Solomon reigned from the river (Euphrates) unto the land of the Philistines, and the border of Egypt.* 2 Chron. ix. 26.—*For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him: and Judah and*

and Israel dwelt, every man, under his vine, and under his fig tree. 1 Kings iv. 24, 25.

The succession was hereditary: but failed in the first instance in the line of Saul; which was set aside by the express order of the Deity. It was however maintained in an uninterrupted series among the people of Judah in the family of David, as God had intimated, that it should be. And though that people became in time very wicked; yet their kingdom was better regulated, and in time more powerful, than that of Israel, and in consequence of it lasted for a longer season.

And whereas he says, that monarchy was the work of an infernal agent for the introduction of idolatry; we may be assured of the express contrary; and that it was ordained by God to remedy that very evil, which had taken place among his people. This is evident from the temple at Jerusalem planned, and perfected, by two of their first kings; and from the worship of the true God by these means established, when it was lost among other nations. And this worship was kept up by their sons, who came after them in hereditary succession.

And

And though there were some, who introduced foreign rites, and there was at all times a fatal propensity to idolatry; yet very excellent princes arose, who tried to stem the torrent, and to reduce the national worship to its former purity. And it was for a while maintained. But in the sister kingdom there was a falling off from the beginning: and a base worship immediately took place. This was introduced, and upheld, by those apostate princes, who for the most part obtained the sovereign rule either by election, or usurpation. In consequence of this the kingdom was subject to all those evils, with which this bad policy is attended: such as factions, and lasting animosities between the prevalent, and disappointed parties.

We may from hence perceive, that this political * writer is mistaken in every article

* The gentleman, whose opinions I have taken the liberty to controvert, held an honourable post under Congress during the American war: and acquitted himself with great zeal, and address. But now the war is over, it is wonderful, that he should continue his bitterness, and spread contagion in another clime. The Americans fought independency; and they have obtained it. And as the whole is now settled,
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ticle of his allegation ; and did not understand a single text, which he quotes, or to which he refers. We may therefore without any breach of charity conclude, that he has been by no means duly conversant in the sacred writings : and in consequence of it seems to have but little of that *fear* before his eyes, *which is the beginning of wisdom*. For, shocking to repeat ! what is the immediate work of God, he in express terms attributes to the operation of the *devil*. The inference which naturally follows is plain. Every person, who is at all tinctured with a zeal for religion, and a love of truth, will form his judgment accordingly.

may they enjoy every blessing of heaven. May they improve in religion, and morality ; in arts and sciences : and equal every nation of Europe in all, that is good, and great. This is my wish : and may it be confirmed. But then let us obtain from them an equal portion of charity, and goodwill. The contest, I say, is past. Why then does animosity any longer subsist, and a turbulent spirit prevail, like the swollen swell of an unquiet sea, after the storm is over ? Why does this person in particular unnecessarily expend his labours in fomenting dissensions and promoting extraneous evil ? Why does he embroil himself with the feuds of France ; or the politics of Great Britain ? Does he think, that a mine is formed, and a train laid, to blow up our excellent constitution ? (May God in his infinite mercy preserve us from such a calamity.) Still, Why does he lend his sparkling firebrand to quicken the explosion ?

Concerning

Concerning the Objection made to the Slaughter of the Canaanites.

There is no part of the sacred writings, which has been esteemed so exceptionable, as the account given of the slaughter of the seven nations in Canaan. The impropriety of the fact has been used by many, who were no friends to Revelation, and who have announced it to have been a most unjust and cruel proceeding; and unworthy both of God and man. But they, who place it in this very unfavourable light, do not consider all the leading circumstances, with which it is accompanied. Those, who have a due faith of the scriptures, and a true sense of the justice of the Deity, must necessarily acquiesce in the history, as delivered: for the whole was the work of God, being authorized by him. But without having recourse to this expedient, let us consider the history of the Canaanites; and see, whether they did not amply deserve all, that was inflicted upon them. They are represented as wicked, and degenerate,

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beyond all other nations. And if it had pleased God to have swept them away by a deluge, or buried them quick by an earthquake, I do not see, how any body could have arraigned the proceeding. Such fearful events have happened in different ages; and are still not unfrequent upon the great western continent. But who in any of these instances called in question either the wisdom, or justice of God; though these people did not offend, as the Canaanites offended?

But it will be said, that instead of any such judgments, He made the Israelites the executioners of His purpose, whom the Canaanites could not have injured. We will admit this for the present. But why will you not allow the same licence to the God of all justice, as you grant to every earthly monarch? There is not a king, that reigns, who does not either in his own person condemn those, whom he thinks worthy of death: or else delegates his power to magistrates, and judges; and afterwards to inferior officers, by whom delinquents are
taken

taken off. Every year, and almost every month, affords instances of these melancholy, but necessary, proceedings. And though in civilized states the number may not at any particular time be very great; yet by degrees it increases; and a multitude in time will be found to have suffered.

But still it may be urged, that the aggregate can never equal the carnage in the land of Canaan. Let it be allowed, but it will be found of little moment: for we must consider, that the justice of condemnation does not depend upon the frequency of execution, nor the numbers consigned to death. When a set of men have rendered themselves not only unworthy, but pernicious, citizens, and enemies to mankind, (it matters not whether ten, or twenty, or twenty myriads) they are all equally obnoxious to the law, and their lives forfeited. I therefore ask again—Why will you not grant to the Deity the same privilege which you allow to man?

But, it will be said, no law involves
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whole

whole families*; nor cuts off wives and children, though the chief persons, and leaders, should be ever so guilty. Undoubtedly no human edict should be carried to such an extremity, though there should be strong suspicions of future degeneracy and retaliation. For man is not gifted with foreknowledge; nor *can he try the beard and reins*. The lives, and fortunes of a whole community must not be determined by conjecture, and surmise. Yet people will sometimes be guided by forecast: and their determinations are often consonant to reason and truth. A person, who plants a number of trees, and finds them degene-

* However whole families are sometimes involved to a degree in the consequences of another's guilt. When any man suffers by the law, his wife, children, and relations, are more or less affected by his punishment: and sometimes brought to ruin. It pleases God to let evils of many kinds operate indiscriminately. In plagues and epidemical disorders parents and children are alike swept away. Children likewise are greatly injured by their parents vices: and are liable from a better state to be reduced to poverty, shame, contempt, and ignorance, to the hurt of both body and mind. Such is the original constitution of man, which cannot, unless we were new formed, be corrected in this life. But it will be remedied, and the evils compensated in the next, to all those, who merit the blessing.

rate,

rate, and become an impediment to others, will pluck them up, young and old; and commit them to the flames. Once more therefore I say, if this be reasonable in man, who sees but in part; why will you not allow the same prerogative in God, whose attribute is not precarious forecast, but foreknowledge absolute? If he made the Israelites the ministers of his will to pluck up and destroy: the same is done by every earthly prince, who in like manner delegates his power. In respect to the Israelites, the commission was very properly given; as it made them inexcusable, if they were ever guilty of the like abominations.

Of the Usurpation, of which the Canaanites, were guilty.

But there are other things to be considered, which will make this objection less and less formidable. The Canaanites were certainly usurpers: and had acted in open defiance of God's ordinance, by seizing upon the land appropriated from the beginning to the children of Israel. Moses ac-

cordingly in a very sublime hymn, which he composed when he was going to leave his people, intimates to them, that the land of Canaan was their peculiar inheritance. He says, that the traditon was well known, and of long standing. * *Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations. Ask thy father, and he will shew thee: thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam; he set the bounds of people (in general) according to the number of the children of Israel.* We find, that in the primitive division of the earth the future sons of Jacob were particularly considered: and the limits of other nations so ordered, that there might be a particular region appointed; which was to be adapted to their future extent, and number. *For the Lord's portion is his people. Jacob the lot, or measure, of his inheritance.* In the Eusebian† Chronicle of Scaliger mention is made of Canaan the son of Ham first making an innovation in the world. He trespassed upon

* Deuteron. xxxii. 7, &c.

† P. 10.

the rights of his brethren, and seized upon the land, which had been appropriated to God's future people. That it was destined to them appears by its being uniformly called *the land of promise*: and it seems to have been for a long time vacant: no nation having the boldness to seize it. But some short time before the arrival of Abraham, the sons of Canaan had taken it to themselves, and occupied the whole. Hence it is said, when the patriarch was passing by Sichem, that * *the Canaanite was then in the land*. By this is intimated, that this people were but lately come into that country. When therefore the Israelites were brought to Canaan, they came to their own inheritance: and those, who had usurped their property, knew it; and knew by whom it had been appointed. Their alarm was accordingly very great. Hence, when the Israelites were upon their march from Egypt, Moses takes notice of the terror, this would cause among the nations of Canaan. † *The people shall bear, and be*

* Gen. xii. 6.—*The Canaanite and Perizzite dwell then in the land.* Ch. xiii. 7.

† Exodus xv. 14, &c.

afraid: sorrow shall take hold of the inhabitants of Palestina. All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away: fear and dread shall fall upon them. By the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still, as a stone: till thy people pass over, whom thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of their INHERITANCE: in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell. The woman of Jericho told the two spies, who came secretly to her house—
** I know that the Lord hath given you this land: and your terror hath fallen upon us; and all the inhabitants of the land faint, because of you. And the men, when they returned, told Joshua—Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land: for even all the inhabitants of the land do faint before us.* These alarms were the terrors of conscience: and arose from a sense of their guilt, in having sacrilegiously seized upon the Lord's portion. Thus we find, that the natives knew their trespass, and dreaded the consequences. The people of Gibeon

* Joshua ii. 9, &c.

were sensible, that they were devoted to ruin ; and therefore resolved to avoid it by obtaining mercy of the Israelites. They accordingly sent an * embassy to them, and by a stratagem obtained their alliance ; which was confirmed to them by an oath. They were some of the most respectable people of Canaan : and their cities were † Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim. Their making peace with the Israelites caused a fresh alarm among the inhabitants of the country—‡ *so that they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city ; as one of the royal cities—and all the men thereof were mighty.* Yet however strong and powerful, they had the sense to know, that they had obtruded themselves impiously, where they had no right : and that the inheritance, which they had seized, would be transferred to the true heirs. They therefore make this excuse to Joshua for their having deceived him—§ *Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the Lord thy God com-*

* Joshua ix. 3, &c.

† Ver. 17.

‡ Chap. x. 2.

§ Chap. ix. 24.

manded Moses to give you all the land: and to destroy the inhabitants.

We find from the history above, that the Canaanites were rebels and apostates; who knew the will of God, yet impiously endeavoured to defeat his purpose. They appear to have been a wicked race, and their offspring promised to be worse; for they were continually adding to their iniquities; upon which account God ordered them to be cut off by the sword. How justly they were doomed to extirpation may be seen by those which remained. For notwithstanding the peremptory order of the Deity many did survive; particularly in the five cities of the Philistim, and in the neighbourhood of Sidon and Tyre: with some other large bodies within the border of Israel. And these turned out through all their generations the most iniquitous of any people upon earth, being devoted to the most base and obscene worship; and to those horrid rites of Baal and Moloch: performing *their abominations upon every hill, and under every * green tree:*

• Deut. xii. 2. 1 Kings xiv. 23.

and

*and offering their sons and daughters for burnt offerings to * devils.*

If then it be ever proper to take off a criminal by a human law; how can we presume to dispute the justice of Providence in devoting these nations to destruction, who were rebels and apostates, and would have proved the greatest enemies to his church and religion? Nay, their posterity, few as they may be comparatively considered, would many times (had it not been for a miraculous interposition) have brought them both to ruin.

Explanation of Deuteronomy, Chap. xx.

Ver. 10. and Objections obviated.

The Holy Scriptures, as they are of so great antiquity, must be attended with some difficulties; for they refer to events and customs, which have been long obsolete. Yet they are so happily composed, that many of these difficulties are easily solved, if we will but consider the context, and likewise apply to those other passages, with

* Psalm cvi. 37. Deut. xxxii. 17.

which

which the history is connected. Through neglect of this caution, and for want of that due reverence, which should be shewn to these sacred histories, people have run into very gross mistakes, to the great prejudice of the word of God. An instance to this purpose I will lay before the reader. It is the passage, to which Mr. Sale * refers, when he says, in shocking terms, *that the Jews had a divine commission, extensive and explicit enough, to attack, subdue, and destroy, the enemies of their religion.* Therefore, as every nation under heaven was opposite to them in this article, the command must extend to universal devastation. Sir John Marsham, who had greater abilities, and more true learning, than Mr. Sale, was led into the same mistake. The passage, of which he treats, is as follows. † *When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee ; then it shall be, that all the people, found therein, shall be tributaries unto thee, and*

* Sale's Koran, Prefatory Discourse, p. 143.

† Deuteron. xx, 10, &c.

shall

*shall serve thee. And if it make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee; then thou shalt besiege it. And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thy hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the women and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself: and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do to all the cities, which are very far * off from thee; which are not of the cities of these nations (that is, which are not of the cities within the limits of Canaan). Deuteron. xx. 10, &c.—*
 Upon this the learned Marsham makes the following comment. *From these words the Hebrew nation imagined, that they had a right without any pretext to levy war, if they did but formally declare it, upon any neighbouring nation, wherever their leaders should choose to lead them. And this they thought,*

* Far off in respect to the Canaanites just before mentioned, who were in the land, and who were to be treated more severely. Among the nations mentioned far off may be reckoned Moab, Ammon, Edom, Hamath, Damascus.

that

that they might put in execution without any pretence of injury received, or of retaliation; or any plea of self-defence: but merely to make acquisition of empire. This was a sufficient reason with them for making war. For the only grounds for war of old arose from the lust of empire.* This is a cruel allegation: and quite contrary to the meaning of Moses, and to the purpose of the Deity, by whom the law was given. The Hebrews never entertained any such opinion, as the author attributes to them. They were for the most part confined to a narrow region, and were appointed from the beginning to be a separate people; and to have as little connexion, as possible, with other nations. Foreign expeditions to any distance were precluded: for they were hemmed in by mountains, or deserts, or by jealous, and hostile neighbours. Such were the limits, by which they were bounded, and beyond these they

* This is contradicted by the historian Trogus Pompeius; and we have the evidence of all antiquity in opposition to the notion. In very early times they entertained no thoughts of forming empires: nor were any upon record founded. The history of the Assyrian under Ninus is a fable.

never

never thought of making any settlement. They had no permit to invade neutral nations. There is a tacit prohibition throughout the whole law of Moses. Had the learned Marsham considered duly, what had preceded in the beginning of the chapter, and also a circumstance in the passage, which he quotes; he would not have been led into so dangerous a mistake. The chapter sets out with giving an account, how the Israelites were to behave in war, both in respect to the Canaanites, and to other nations, who were hostile. Of the former I have spoken, and shewn, that they were to be extirpated, if they stayed, on account of their great wickedness and sacrilege; and their daring opposition to God. But to other cities, which were at a distance in respect to Canaan, the Israelites were to behave in a different manner. In this chapter therefore directions are given about the process to be observed: and it begins with these words.—*When thou goest forth to battle, &c.*—What (let me ask) against a neutral people? any nation that your kings, or governors, out of lust of empire, shall choose

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to

to invade?—No. *When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies.* This is very material and to be observed. For who may we suppose to have been in the eye of God these enemies? Undoubtedly those, who had either invaded the portion of the Lord themselves, or had joined with others in unmerited hostilities. The lawgiver then instructs the people, how they were to act upon such an occasion, as may be seen at large. He then proceeds to their attack of any city, which might be hostile. And though the people of that city were ever so much the aggressors; and had unprovoked invaded the provinces of Israel, and been guilty of those cruelties, with which inroads in those days were accompanied: yet peace was to be offered, and conditions held out, before they proceeded to retaliation. And these conditions were very mild for those times; and favoured of great clemency. For the enemy was to submit, and be tributary. But if they stood out, and would not afford the compensation demanded; every male was to be put to the sword. The residue were to be captives:
and

and the victors *were to feed upon the spoil of their enemies.* By this no neutral nor innocent people is signified, nor is religion at all concerned : nor is any unjust and wanton inroad intimated, which was to be carried on out of pride of heart, and lust of power, but a proper compromise and retaliation for undeserved loss, and injuries. How could these writers conceive, that the Israelites were to hew and slay, wherever they pleased ; and that God would give a sanction to their cruelty ? Yet so they have boldly declared. In those days the law of retaliation prevailed : and an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, was but a moderate compensation from those, who had been cruel and unprovoked aggressors. But the Israelites were not suffered to avail themselves of this right. Whatever the nature of the injury might be ; they were ordered to hold out peace upon very mild conditions, before they began an attack. As to their invading first, and commencing hostilities on account of religion, and to make settlements beyond the land appropriated to them, there is not the least encouragement in the law

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of Moses ; nor any instance of it from their departure from Egypt to the reign of king * David, nor ever afterwards. They were not to make war excepting only when they were authorized by God : even then it was on account of some grievance. Extent of empire was contrary to the genius of the people, and the purpose of the Deity, who placed them with a particular view in Canaan. God could never give a law, which counteracted his own designs.

Thus, what Sir John Marsham, and Mr. Sale, have described as a cruel ordinance, tending to universal conquest, and unlimited slaughter, turns out a rational process, and full of equity and moderation : such as few nations in those early † times would have observed.

* He conquered as far as the Euphrates : but these nations had all been the aggressors.

† Nor in after times, as we may learn from a variety of passages in Thucydides, Polybius, Livy, and other historians. Above all, Homer affords a true picture of the cruelties, which prevailed in his time, and before.

Concerning

Concerning the Israelites borrowing of the Egyptians.

It is said Exodus iii. 21. that the Israelites at their departure from Egypt borrowed largely of the Egyptians, with whom they had sojourned; and that they made no return of the things, which had been thus lent. And it is farther said, that the whole was by divine appointment; which is thought to be inconsistent with the justice of God, as he is a Deity of all equity and truth. However the following command was given:—*I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, and it shall come to pass, that when ye go, ye shall not go empty: but every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her, that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters: and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.* This was the order given to Moses: in consequence of which it is said, that *the children of Israel did according to his word: and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and*

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raiment.

raiment. And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: so that they lent unto them: and they spoiled the Egyptians. Ch. xii. 35, &c. As no return is any where specified, many undue inferences have in consequence of it been made, as if the whole transaction was inconsistent with the justice of God, and the honour of his people: the history is therefore pronounced to be untrue. To consider the merits of the case we must take in the whole history of the Israelites in Egypt.

After that Joseph had been brought into the country, he miraculously was made the preservation of the whole nation. His services were so eminent, that the king gave him the sovereignty and management of the whole kingdom: *only in the throne will I be greater than thou.* Gen. xli. 40. These were the words of the prince to him, when he assigned to him this ample jurisdiction. In consequence of this, Joseph by the consent of Pharaoh brought his father and his brethren into the land of Egypt; and they were gratefully received
by

by the prince and people. They had a district given them for a possession by the appointment of the same king : *and Joseph placed his father, and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.* Gen. xlvii. 11. Thus they lived in peace and security ; till a king arose who was jealous of the Israelites, and dreaded their increasing power. He accordingly forgot all the benefits, which had from them accrued to Egypt, and reduced them to a state of cruel slavery. *The Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour : and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All the service, with which they made them serve was with rigour.* Exod. i. 13, 14. *And the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt. And the children of Israel sighed by reason of their bondage : and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage.* Chap. ii. 23. Their enemies proceeded even to a wantonness in their cruelty, and insisted upon their mak-

ing bricks with stubble instead of straw, in order to render their lives more bitter. And as the Israelites still increased and multiplied; an inhuman edict was given, that every male child, which was born, should be cast into the river and drowned: or otherwise destroyed. This cruel order was carried into execution: and it was merely by the interposition of Providence, that Moses, who was born in those times, escaped. He proved the great lawgiver of the Israelites, and under him they petitioned Pharaoh, that they might go three days journey into the wilderness, and there sacrifice to the God of their fathers. This was refused: till after a series of miracles, and fearful judgments, they were permitted, and even ordered, by Pharaoh, to depart. The Egyptians had suffered so much, that they *were urgent upon the people that they might send them out of the * land in haste.* Exod. xii. 33. At this time by God's permission they

* It seems manifest to me, by the expression used—of *sending them out of the land*, that they never expected, nor wished for, the return of the Israelites. It is not merely *said*, that they *let them go*, or *sent them away*: but *sent them out of the land*.

borrowed

borrowed of the Egyptians the *jewels of silver, and gold; and also raiment. And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent them: and they spoiled the Egyptians.* Ver. 36. In this manner they were by the king's order sent away, together with their flocks, and herds, and with their women, and children: for upon this * Moses had previously insisted. The words of Pharaoh were, † *Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel.* The whole of Israel was collectively sent away: *They were thrust out of Egypt.* From hence, I think, it appears manifest, that they were not expected to come back. If so, what is stiled a ‡ loan, must have been a gift; and no return desired. But, not to insist upon this, let us consider the process of the history. The children of Israel, in full confidence of the king's assurances, set out upon their march: and about the third day arrive upon

* Exod. x. 10. xii. 37.

† Exod. xii. 31.—So Exod. xi. 1. *He shall surely thrust you out hence all together.*

‡ According to the Greek version, the Israelites asked for these things, and they were given.

the border of the Red Sea. Pharaoh, contrary to his faith given, collects—* *six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them—and he pursued after the children of Israel:—and found them encamping by the sea.* The alarm was great: for their situation was such as prevented all opportunity of escaping. Death was inevitable to the greater part: and to those, who might survive, a renewal of Egyptian bondage. In these difficulties it pleased God to order the Israelites about midnight to pass forward through the sea: which parted, and gave them a free passage to the other side, whither they arrived in safety. Their enemies blindly pursued after them: when the waters returned to their original bed; and the Egyptians were overwhelmed in the abyss. The people the next morning saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.

Such was the situation of the Israelites, who had borrowed silver, gold, and raiment; which it is said, that they ought to

* Exod. xiv. 7, 8.

have returned. But to whom? to the Egyptians, who had pursued them? They were all dead, which rendered it impossible. Besides, if any thing were really due, Pharaoh and his people by breach of faith had cancelled the obligation. But let us suppose, that the Israelites, after having performed their purposed sacrifices, had returned to Egypt with a design to give back, what is said to have been lent. They must have been idiots, if, after all they had suffered, they did not come to a compromise. The address at the first interview, according to strict justice, must have been to this purpose: *We are come back in order to make proper restitution of the things you lent us. But before we return, what we borrowed from you, be pleased to restore, what you previously, and illegally, took from us. Pay us for the services, unjustly demanded of us, and of our fathers, for above an hundred years. Pay us for the vassalage, to which we were unduly subjected, and the bondage, under which we groaned, when you took us from our legal possessions, guaranteed to us by your ancestors, and scattered us over the face of the country;*
when

when you exacted a severe task, and gave us not the requisites to perform it. Make returns for the loss of our liberty; for the stripes and indignities, which, though a free people, you obliged us to endure. Lastly, make a proper retribution for the murder of our innocents, whom you either strangled at the birth, or else threw into the river. When your accounts have been properly stated, see on which side the balance lies. To these arguments no answer could be given. When therefore such an estimate is made, it will be found to turn out greatly in favour of the Israelites. How then can a person be blamed for not returning a mina, who has a demand of a talent? or not paying ten pounds, where he is owed a thousand? The prior and greater obligation is first to be considered. But all the gold, and silver, and all the precious things, of Egypt could not atone for the injustice done to the Israelites. Besides, as I have before said, if there had been any thing due, Pharaoh and his people by their breach of faith cancelled all obligation. Their injurious attack drove the Israelites away, and precluded all return.

turn. And after all we may be certain, that no return was expected.

Of the Negroes.

Another objection to the veracity of the scriptures has been founded upon a notion, that the Negroes are a separate race of men; and therefore could not possibly be derived from Adam, or Noah, as we are taught by Moses. In answer to this I recur to my former position, that we should not yield to any idle doubts, after our faith is well founded. In consequence of this I ask, if the authenticity of the scriptures, and the truth of the Christian religion, have not been sufficiently proved? If so, we should not suffer any foreign and precarious article to disturb our peace of mind. Let the Negroes shift for themselves. And after all the whole is merely a surmise; for there is not the least authority for the notion. It may therefore appear unnecessary to refute it. But as a confutation may serve to shew the weakness of these arguments, and how wrong we are, after our faith is determined, to admit such undue influence,
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I will endeavour to shew the futility of this assertion.

It has pleased God to give to all families, or nations, some particular marks, by which they are distinguished from their neighbours. But they differ still farther from those at a great distance in consequence of the heat or cold which they experience; and the climate under which they live. If we take people from the extremes, at a very great interval of latitude, and compare them together, they may possibly seem to persons unexperienced quite different beings. But if we approach from the one to the other by degrees, and observe the different nations, who furnish the interval, there will appear a just gradation, and the variation will be found no more, than might be expected from manner of life, and situation. A Dane, Saxon, and Englishman, of the north, will be found in general very similar in feature and complexion. If we descend to the south of France, we shall meet with people less fair: and if we pass to Portugal, the natives will appear upon comparison much darker, and of different features.

Cross

Cross over to Morocco and Taffilat, they become more and more swart. If we proceed beyond the desert of Zara to the tropic, we meet with people quite black, but with straight and floating hair. Farther within the tropics, and on each side of the line are perfect Negroes; people for the most part of similar clumsy and bloated features, and of the darkest hue of any; also with woolly and frizled hair. The whole of these variations depends upon situation, and climate. The Baron de Pauw says therefore very truly—* *Que le genre humain ait eu une tige, ou qu'il en ait eu plusieurs, question inutile que des physiciens ne devraient jamais agiter en Europe. Il est certain que le climat seul produit toutes les variétés, qu'on observe parmi les hommes.—† Le teint plus ou moins obscur, plus ou moins foncé, des habitants, qui essuient ces différentes températures de l'air entre les tropiques, prouve donc, indépendamment de toute autre démonstration, que le climat seul colore les substances les plus intimes du corps*

* *Recherches—sur les Americaines, tom. i. p. 216.*

† *P. 219.*

humain.

humain. For his opinion he gives very good reasons from the situation and heat experienced by the different nations in those parts.

The Egyptians acknowledged themselves to be of the race of Mizraim; and from that person their country was * denominated. They therefore had no connexion with the people on the western coast of Africa, nor bore any relation to them. Now we are told that the natives of the lowest part of Egypt were dark; and those higher up, and nearer the sun, darker: but those of the upper region approached to black, and woolly hair. Hence this characteristic } was not confined to any one race of men. } 11
This is farther proved by many of the Islanders visited by our late voyagers, and particularly from the observations of Captain Cook, and Dr. Forster. They speak of a great difference in respect to complexion, stature, and hair, among people of the same place: which they say depended upon their being more or less exposed, and the

* We are told by Leo Africanus, that the Arabians at this day call it Mezre.

particular diet, which they used. This was observable at Otaheite. The latter writer says of the New Caledonians, * *They are all of a swartby colour, their hair is crisped but not very woolly—their faces round, with thick lips and wide mouths.—The inhabitants of Tanna are almost of the same swartby colour, as the former; only a few had a clearer complexion, and in these the tips of their hair were of a yellowish brown. The hair and beards of the rest were all black and crisp, and in some woolly.—The natives of Mellicollo border the nearest upon the tribe of monkeys †. —The hair is in the greater part of them woolly and frizled: their complexion is sooty, their features harsh: the cheek bone and face broad. Captain Carteret describes the natives of Egmont island, as ‡ black and woolly headed. He describes another island, where the people were black and woolly headed, like the negroes of § Africa. Many more instances might be produced: but these will*

* Forster, vol. iii. p. 239, and note.

† P. 242.

‡ Carteret's Voyage, p. 580.

§ Ibid. p. 587.—He mentions the like of other people, p. 599, and 604.

suffice

suffice to shew, that this difference of hair and complexion, and the other anomalies, with which we find it accompanied, are not confined to any particular race of men. For they are to be found among people, that never had any connexion with the coast of Guinea, or Negroland: on the contrary, they are as far removed from it, as any people upon earth can * be: whole continents come between.

The variation therefore in respect to complexion, form, and feature, depends in great measure upon the heat and cold experienced, and the way of life, to which people accustom themselves. And there are other occult causes, with which we are unacquainted, and by which a variation in the species of all animals is produced. Hence it happens, that people, however distinct, become in time like the natives, among whom they settle, however separate they may keep themselves. This is manifest

* Their language and customs shew, that they were originally from the Philippines, and other islands in their neighbourhood. See a very curious note to the first vol. of Capt. Cook's Voyage in the Resolution, p. 373.

from a colony of Jews at Cochin upon the coast of Malabar; who came there according to * Hamilton as early as the captivity under Nebuchadnezzar. Thus much is certain, the era is so far back, that they know not now the time of their arrival. The Jews originally were a fair people; but these of whom we are speaking, are become in all respects like the Indians, among whom they reside. They consisted formerly of 80,000 families: but are now reduced to 4000. Mr. Bate, a clergyman, who had a son in the East Indies, made application to have some particulars of their history. † *I wrote over to the coast of Malabar, to know what tradition the Jews have retained, as to the time of their settlement at Cochin, but had no satisfactory answer. Ezekiel, the Rabbin of the synagogue, did indeed send me a transcript of their copper plate, bung up in their synagogue. 'Tis written in*

* Account of the East Indies, c. xxvi. p. 323.

† Bate's Rationale, p. 223. Notes. Maffei in his Indian history speaks of the Jews, as being in great numbers at Cochin. He styles them Egyptian Jews: I suppose, from their colour. See his Hist. l. xvi. p. 332. D.

*the Malabar language, put into common Hebrew characters; interlined with a literal version in Hebrew; with an Hebrew paraphrase upon that literal version. But I can find no date of their settlement there: only a grant from a Malabar prince called Schirin Perimal, i. e. Prince Schirin, to allow them to settle there, with certain privileges. Of these Jews he farther says, that they are now grown as black, as the other Malabarians, who are hardly a shade lighter than those of Guinea, Benin, or Angola: And he very truly insists, that this is a discovery which clearly proves, that the different complexions of the different sons of Noah may be occasioned by difference of climate, air, food, water, or other natural causes. It is said, in conformity to the account above, that the Portuguese, who have been settled upon the coast of Angola for three centuries, and somewhat more, are become absolute Negroes. Of this we are assured by the Abbe de * Manet, who was in that part of the world in the year 1764; and baptised seve-*

* Nouvelle Histoire de l'Afrique Francoise.—Paris 1767.

ral of their children. He is quoted by Mr. de Pauw, who gives us this farther information. * Quant aux descendants des premiers Portugais, qui vinrent fixer leur demeure dans cette partie du monde vers l'an 1450, ils sont devenus des nègres tres-achevés pour le coloris, la laine de la tête, de la barbe, et les traits de la physionomie, quoiqu'ils ayent d'ailleurs retenu les points plus essentiels d'une Christianisme dégénéré, et conservé la langue du Portugal, corrompue, à la vérité, par différentes dialectes Africains.

The like is mentioned by Moore in his account of the River Gambia. He takes notice of some of the same nation, who had resided for above three centuries near the Mundingoes, and differ so little from them, as to be called Negroes. This however they resent, though they are not easily to be distinguished.

From hence we may be satisfied, that the Negroes are by no means a different species of men: and in consequence of this we

* Recherches sur les Americaines, tom. i. p. 211.

should learn how wrong it is to suffer the idle surmises of disaffected persons to interfere with our faith ; and trouble our minds with a renewal of doubts and scruples. Of these there will be no end, if we yield to every idle notion that is broached, and let fancy prevail over reason.

The fatal Consequences of this Weakness.

It may seem extraordinary, that any person should suffer himself to be misled by such an imaginary guide. But fancy is a formidable phantom. We say indeed of truth, that it is a stubborn antagonist ; and that matter of fact cannot be borne down by opinion. But we experience the contrary every day. The most positive evidence, and repeated proofs, give way to scruple, and disgust, and preconceived notions ; the wayward offspring of vanity, and ignorance. How many articles are plainly declared in the scriptures, to which people will not, cannot accede, because they do not suit with their limited mode of thinking ? They therefore blindly yield to
their

their prejudices, and remain inflexible in their unbelief. In this manner, as I have before said, they abandon reason for fancy; and make their deductions accordingly. But when they thus give up the most faithful inmate of their breast for this ideal favourite, the illusion is fatal; and the issue spurious and unnatural. We see in such persons the fable of Ixion verified. Instead of a goddess he embraced a cloud: and what was the consequence?—A monster.

C O N C L U S I O N.

IN this manner it has been my earnest endeavour to shew the authenticity, and excellence, of the holy scriptures; and the truth of the Christian religion. But as there is such debility in the mind of man, and a pride of heart, which produces these doubts and difficulties, these *stumbling-blocks*, and *rocks of offence*; let us seek a remedy in that excellent prayer of our church, in which we invoke the Deity: *That it may please Him to give to all his people increase of grace; to bear meekly his word, to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.* Whoever will in this wise read, learn, and inwardly digest, the holy scriptures, cannot fail of being a Christian.

F I N I S.

Richard Dooler.
Holmesdale.

EVIDENCES
OF
CHRISTIANITY:
OR
A COLLECTION OF REMARKS
INTENDED
TO DISPLAY THE EXCELLENCE,
RECOMMEND THE PURITY,
ILLUSTRATE THE CHARACTER,
AND
EVINCE THE AUTHENTICITY,
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BY GILBERT WAKEFIELD, B. A.
LATE FELLOW OF JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

None of the wicked shall understand;
But the wise shall understand. *Daniel* xii. 10.

Τοις παθουσιν ακολουθητικῶν, ματαιῶς ἀκροῦται καὶ ἀνωφελὴς
ἐπειδὴ τὸ τέλος ἐστίν, ἢ γνῶσις, ἀλλὰ πράξις. ARISTOTLE.

quantum vertice ad auras
Ætherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.
Ergo non hiemes illam, non flabra, neque imbres
Conveliunt: innacta manet. VIRGIL.

THE SECOND EDITION, MUCH ENLARGED.

LONDON:
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AND J. DEIGHTON. N^o. 225, HOLBORN.

1793.



TO
THOMAS NORTHMORE, Esq.
OF
UPPER SEYMOUR-STREET.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH the formality of a Dedication may seem but ill-suited to the sincerity and intimacy of our friendship, I could not deny myself the gratification of this public declaration of my affection and esteem. ,

From the contemplation of that *political* delusion, produced by calumny and corruption on timidity and weakness; a delusion, which has seduced *Englishmen* into associations against their own liberties and happiness;—and from that *religious* infatuation, which confines the privileges and comforts of society to the figments of knavery and ignorance; I turn myself for relief to a congenial mind, deeply affected with the infelicities of our times and country. Ever unreserved in my speculations, and the profession of them, I think it much to my honour,

nour, amidst such degeneracy of manners and failure of resolution, to number among my friends a chosen few, the votaries of Integrity and Truth; not more distinguished by rectitude of sentiment and the gifts of intellect, than by every personal accomplishment and every social virtue. Whether *we* shall see a rectification of our constitution, and live to rejoice over the meliorated condition of the multitudes of our countrymen in rags and beggary, in misery and vice, (such is the solicitude of our glorious government for *their* welfare!) it is impossible to pronounce: so gradual is the process of Providence in the reformation of the world! so long and severe may be the intermediate chastisement of this nation for its unparalleled enormities! No effort, however, of benevolence for the general good will be thrown away: and, under every variation of events, it will continue the duty of individuals, as it will constitute their final triumph, to live above the corruptions of the age, to plead the cause of wretchedness and poverty, to beat down the pride of
their

their oppressors, to meet with composure scoffs and insults, disabilities and embarrassments, as fellow-sufferers with the best and wisest of our species, and among the rest, with that *great reformer*, the SAVIOUR of the world himself, persecuted even to crucifixion by the corrupt *ecclesiastics* and abandoned *statesmen* of his day. The disproportion of our numbers shall not divert us from a dauntless profession of our principles and a vigorous perseverance in the work of reformation. When the oracle directed the *Athenians* to find out that *single* person, who opposed the public sentiment, *Phocion* nobly declared himself to be the man. “ I am dissatisfied, says he, with ALL “ that ye have *done* and *said*.”

At present the political horizon is dark and lowering; and *Europe* seems to be precipitating into the very sink of slavery. The spirit of subjects is not less abject than the insolence of their rulers is domineering: but the prospect may brighten speedily; and *distress* at least disabuse our countrymen into a demand for those temperate reforms,

forms, by which no peace will be endangered, no revolution and it's evils be rendered necessary ; evils, which the present measures of administration have undeniably a most obvious tendency to produce. Of all possible calamities WAR is the most repugnant to the feelings of the *Christian* and the *philosopher* : and who shall calculate that immensity of guilt, which wantonly calls forth thousands and tens of thousands to plunge their swords in the bosoms of their fellow-creatures, and desolates the creation of the Almighty, the God of *Peace* and *Mercy*, the *Father of Mankind*, with torrents of human blood ? If the rulers of the earth were suffered to quench their rage in person by this sanguinary process ; the maxim of the pacific *Jesus* might receive it's efficacy, to the benefit of our species, to the redemption of innumerable victims more meritorious than their sacrificers : “ *They*
“ *that take up the sword, SHALL PERISH BY*
“ *THE SWORD.*” The purport of *his* mission, and the design of the *divine administration*, however dilatory the execution of it's schemes

schemes to our inadequate comprehension, is the HAPPINESS of *man*: but that *happiness* can only result from VIRTUE; and *virtue* is inseparable from CIVIL LIBERTY: a noble truth! gloriously asserted by the father of poetry and the morning-star of *heathen* literature:

Ἡμῖσι γὰρ τ' ἀρετῆς ἀποκινύται εὐρυς πα Ζεὺς
 Ἀνθρώποις, ὅτε μιν κατὰ δαίμον ἡμᾶρ ἐλθῇ.

*Jove fixt it certain, that the fatal day,
 Which makes men slaves, takes half their worth
 away.*

Our wish, therefore, for that *equality* of government, in which the *civil rights* and *legal protection* of rich and poor, base and noble, shall be indiscriminate, (a position laid down as indisputably true by the great political writers of antiquity, and only questioned by the audacity of modern ignorance) our wish, I say, for the undistinguished protection of law, is *rational*, *benevolent*, and *virtuous*; and every attempt to promote these principles, consistently with the *general happiness*, and, if possible, with *peace*, is a
 real

real co-operation with the designs of Providence, the truest exemplification of the *Christian* doctrine, and the most perfect obedience to the will of GOD.

I remain, Dear Sir,

with the sincerest respect,

your affectionate friend

THE AUTHOR.

Hackney, June 13, 1793.

P R E F A C E.

I SHALL only detain the reader at his entrance on the following work, whilst I inform him, that he will find a considerable addition of *new* materials, and the *old*, I hope, much improved. Should the present attempt in behalf of religion be favourably received by the public, I shall take an early opportunity, if possible, of submitting to their notice a course of similar *Remarks*, tending to authenticate, illustrate, and explain the *Jewish Scriptures* also. In the mean time, as the following observations respect chiefly the *internal Evidences of Christianity*, I beg leave to premise, that by this expression I wish the reader to understand, “ a *Proof* of the *Divinity* of the “ *Christian* religion, derived from the cir- “ *cumstances* of that religion itself; whether “ collected from its *history*, or inferred from “ its *condition* and *effects*.”

I have thought proper to subjoin the following precautions from *Spencer* on *Prodigies*, to engage the candid attention of the reader.

“ In

“ In matters of a moral nature, argu-
 “ ments, which appear before the mind in
 “ a high degree of probability, are sufficient
 “ rules of faith and practice. In all matters
 “ we are to consider, not what arguments
 “ we would require, but what the subject
 “ will bear. For neither religion nor rea-
 “ son require men to believe more strongly
 “ than the premises conclude, or to look
 “ for premises of greater strength than the
 “ condition of the subject will admit. Too
 “ great a facility in taking up insufficient
 “ proofs in some, and too great a rigour in
 “ exacting them beyond the capacity of
 “ the matter in others, have been of equal
 “ prejudice to truth. It is therefore a justice
 “ the reader owes the argument and him-
 “ self, not to expect *clear demonstration*, but
 “ *high probabilities* therein: a title, which
 “ I am not without some hope, that the rea-
 “ sons, hereafter alledged, may deserve.”

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

IF the Reader should find any thing in the following pages, that tends to confirm his opinion of the Truth and Excellence of Christianity, his obligations are due to the Rev. THOMAS WAKEFIELD of Richmond in Surry, at whose instigation these Remarks were put together, and to whom they are cordially inscribed by his

Affectionate Brother

THE AUTHOR.

EVIDENCES, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

IT is a *heathen* maxim of antiquity, that *a great book is a great evil*: and the wisest of the Kings of *Israel* has observed with no less justice, that *of making many books there is no end*. The benefit and convenience of an Author and the Public would be equally consulted, if the spirit of these aphorisms were punctually regarded in all literary undertakings.

Should the sense and learning of an age be estimated by the number of it's writings, the generation, in which we live, might assert a higher rank on the scale of letters than the most accomplished periods of ancient time: the Genius of *Athens* and *Rome* themselves would bow down before us. But, on the other hand, if *intrinsic*
B *excellence*

excellence and novelty of information must decide the claim of literary merit, we should find ourselves, I firmly believe, degraded to a much lower point than our pride would previously suffer us to imagine. For my own part, it is my wish and intention, neither to misemploy my own time, nor to abuse the patience and leisure of my reader, by retailing the fruits of another's labour and ingenuity; and, accordingly, the following *Remarks* corroborative and illustrative of *Christianity*, will be found, to the best of my knowledge, either entirely *new*, or, where the subject has been already treated by my predecessors in this province, as *concise* as possible*. By such a procedure, we should act a more honourable part to them, who have gone before us; more uprightly to ourselves, and more respectfully to the community at large: and, what is of principal importance, we should more effectually contribute also to the advancement of solid learning and our own fame as useful and honest writers†.

* I approve the sentiment of *Ulysses* in *Homer*:

————— ἰχθρον δὲ μοι εἶναι

Αὐτὸς ἀριζήλως πηρημένα μυθολογεῖται.

† Επεὶ δ' ἐξ εἴρω σοφῶν,

Το τε παλαι το τε νυν' ὕδρι γὰρ ῥαδίον

Ἀγρήλων πικρὴν πύλας ἐξέρπει. *Bacchylides* apud *Clem. Al.*

REMARK

REMARK I.

No contemptible presumption in favour of a *revelation* similarly circumstanced with *Christianity*, resembling it, I mean, in the genius of it's precepts, the mode of it's communication, and the character of it's great *Apostle**; arises, in my judgement, from a consideration of those remarkable declarations of the god-like *Socrates* in the well-known *Dialogue* of *Plato*†. After that extraordinary person had represented to his pupil *Alcibiades* the danger and temerity of offering *sacrifices* and *supplications* to the Gods for things *apparently* beneficial, but possibly *fatal* in the issue to our happiness and virtue from the uncertainty of future events; and had given the preference to those prayers, which resign the conduct of the universe and of individuals to the absolute will of Providence; he adds: “ In my opinion it is
 “ better to abstain altogether from *prayer* and
 “ *sacrifice*; and to wait for information, how we
 “ ought to be affected towards God and men. But

* *Christ Jesus the APOSTLE and high-priest of our confession*, says the sublime author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, c. iii. v. 1.

† The *Alcibiades Secundus*.

“ when, said *Alcibiades*, will this information
 “ come; and who will be our instructor? for the
 “ sight of this person would give me the most
 “ lively satisfaction. He it is, replied *Socrates*,
 “ who is solicitous for thy welfare. I am ready,
 “ says *Alcibiades*, to comply with all the injunc-
 “ tions of this man, whoever he may be, if I can
 “ but grow better by this compliance. And assure
 “ yourself, rejoined *Socrates*, that he also has a
 “ wonderful eagerness in your behalf*.”

Whether something like that report, traditional as it should seem, which afterwards prevailed so generally throughout the *East* †, and which I am inclined myself to carry up to a more venerable origin than *random fancy* or *philosophical speculation* (feeling as I do no impulse from inclination, no authority from learning, no encouragement from antiquity, no arguments from reason, for the exclusion of the Deity from occasional communication with his creatures in former periods): whether, I say, such a rumour had

* This was the period of that *mighty famine*, when mankind *began to be in want*, Luke xv. 14. when reflecting minds began to see the necessity of some extraordinary interference to rectify the dark and depraved condition of the world.

† See *Suetonius* in *Vespasian*, iv. 8. and the commentators on the place: edit. *Pitisci*.

reached

reached the ears of *Socrates*, or his pure and penetrating mind, contrasting the blindness and corruption of the world with the benignity and wisdom of a cœlestial superintendant of the universe, had conducted him to this conclusion; upon either supposition, the opinion of so competent a witness upon the condition of human affairs must be allowed, I think, by every impartial judge, of no inconsiderable moment, and infinitely more worthy of attention than the bold positions of modern *deists*, either with affections depraved by vicious practices, with minds distorted by obliquity of purpose, or with understandings puffed up by imaginary science. I must beg leave at least for myself to demur at any opinion on these subjects, which does not come recommended to me by the united qualities of upright *intellect*, steady *virtue*, and solid *learning*.

As nothing, that can contribute to the furtherance of the *gospel*, or the promotion of scriptural knowledge, appears to me impertinent to the present subject, I shall make no apology for submitting to the consideration of the judicious reader, whether a most difficult passage in the *epistle* to the *Romans* * does not admit of explanation

* Chap. viii. ver. 26.

from the ideas arising out of the present disquisitions on the sentiments of *Socrates*.

And in like manner also the spirit (the power and precepts of the gospel) *assisteth* (conspires in assisting) *our infirmities: for WE KNOW NOT WHAT TO PRAY FOR AS WE OUGHT; but this very spirit intercedeth for us with secret groans:* that is, groans *not uttered*, in opposition to the importunate and *audible* utterances of our anxious hearts.

Indeed the whole *chapter*, which appears at first involved in great obscurity, may probably receive much illumination from these suggestions.

REMARK II.

I PROCEED to a *Remark*, not decisive perhaps, but of no inconsiderable tendency and of extensive application.

If the books of the *New Testament* be the production of imposture, the forgers of them were *Jews*: in other words, these writings *can* scarcely have been invented by any man, or set of men, of any *other nation* whatsoever.—Now this observation brings the question at least into a narrower compass, and contracts the ground upon which
our

our sceptical antagonist must take his stand for his encounter with the advocate of *Christianity*.

For to supersede the mention of the extreme *difficulty*, or rather the *impossibility*, if we would state the point with impartiality and precision, of personating, without a liability to the grossest errors, a character connected with the mention of *celebrated men, times, places, customs, manners*, and other *specific* circumstances without number; not, I say, to insist on these peculiarities, I make no scruple to maintain, that every reader, conversant with the writers of antiquity, and endowed with the least critical perception of style and phraseology, must acknowledge at once the mode of composition in the *New Testament* to wear a complexion essentially distinct from that of all other writings whatsoever, except those of *Jews*, and such as have been modelled by the same standard. No competent judge, I am persuaded, will venture to controvert this position *.

* Non difficile foret homini studioso, qui, quidè in Judæorum linguâ et scriptis aliquam diù versatus fuerit, Novum Testamentum de versu ferè in versum, in linguam Talmudicam transfundere; adeò à vulgari eorum et communi loquendi ratione nusquàm et nunquàm discedit. *Lightfoot præf. in 2dum vol. Opp. edit. Rotædam.*

The *religious sentiments* of the *Hebrews* were confessedly very different from those of any other ancient nation: their *religious institutions* were the daily employment of their lives to a scrupulous exactness, and the study of their *religious writings* was made the perpetual engagement and obligation of particular sects among them. The entire community might be stiled indeed *a nation of priests*. Thus the whole current of their ideas became tinged of course with an infusion of *religious images*; and the colour imbibed from this source became incorporated with the whole texture of their public and private life; with their actions, their writings, their sentiments, and their conversation. Their stile of composition, therefore, and their cast of thought, are peculiarly their own; that is, characteristic of the people, and essentially distinguished from any nationally *Greek* or *Roman* author that can be mentioned.

But the pertinency and force of this general *remark* will be best understood by a particular illustration of it. None but a *Jew*, for example, (to assume the fact as it is recorded) would have conceived such a relation as the following in similar terms*.

* Another illustration of this topic may be seen in my observations on the words *ἐκ νεφελῶν*, Matt. xiv. 2. in my *commentary* on that *Gospel*.

Now

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep-market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

For an ANGEL went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.*

The pool, bath, or spring, here spoken of, I suppose to have been like some of those mentioned by *Herodotus* and *Pliny*, to whom I refer the reader†; such indeed as travellers of our own times often mention. That warmth and occasional fluctuation, from some secret and unknown cause, for which a *Greek* or *Roman* historian would have attempted to account in conformity to the philosophical principles of his own peculiar system‡; a *Jew*, who was accustomed to ascribe all events to the immediate agency of his King *Yehovah*, naturally attributes to the operation of a

* John v. 2—5.

† Herod. iv. 181. Plin. Nat. Hist. ii. 97, 103. xxxi. 1, 4. See also *Pausanias*, iv. 35. edit. *Kuhnii*, and the notes there.

‡ See the *Scholiast* on *Apoll. Rhod.* iii. 225. *Lucret.* vi. 854.

ministering

ministering ANGEL: a mode of solution, which would not readily have occurred but to a disciple of the law of Moses*.—And let me add, this idea,

* The *heathens* also, it must be confessed, occasionally ascribed very *extraordinary* and *unexpected* events to the interference of the *Gods*, but less uniformly in general, and through the mediation of other *Gods*. Διαδεδησκει γὰρ τοῦ παγχυ παυροι, ὑπ' ευτυχίας και ΘΕΩΝ μαλλον, η τιχης. *Arcæus* ii. 1. init. Individual heathens, in proportion to their sanctity of character and their reverence for the Supreme Being, approximated to the rigour of the *Jewish* ideas on this subject. *Eustathius*, in his commentary on the first verse of the *Iliad*, says: Ολως δι, ἡ ποιησις παρ το παρελλαγμην, και ξειζον και εξαριτον και τερασιον, η και τερατωδης, ως τι θειον γινεται και εις θειον αποκαθιστα.

The incomparable *Hippocrates*, p. 293. edit. *Foës*. has expressed himself in words truly evangelical: Εμοι δι και αυτω δει ταυτα τα παθια θια ηναι, και τ'αλλα παντα και υδ' ιτεροι ιτερω θιοτεροι, υδ' ανθρωπινοτεροι, αλλα παντα θια.

Cornelius Nepos says of *Timoleon*, sect. 4. *Nihil rerum humanarum sine DEORUM numine agi putabat.*

But on this subject I know nothing comparable to some verses of *Oppian*, *halicut.* ii. 3. to which every reader of sublimity and beauty, who has not remarked them before, will thank me for directing his attention.

————— τα δι πε τις επιχθοιοισιν ἀπαντα
Αθανατων σπηγηι· τι γαρ μεροπεισιν αντον
Νοσφι ΘΕΩΝ; υδ' ὅσον ὑπ' εκ τοδ' ιχνη αιραι,
Ουδ' ὅσον αμπετασαι βλεφαρων περιφαια κυκλα.
Αλλ' αυτοι κρατεισι και ιθυισιν εκαστα,
Τηλοθεν ιγγυς ιοντες.

of

of the particular interference of the Deity by his *angels*, seems to have been more than usually predominant in those times, which approximate to the æra, in which we believe the *apostles* to have lived and written. What the original history, in it's account of those animals, which accompanied *Noah* in the ark, relates in the following simple language,—*Two of every sort shall come unto thee to keep them alive**;—the *Chaldee paraphrases* of *Jonathan* and *Jerusalem* dignify with this observable addition: *Two of each shall go in unto thee BY THE HAND OF AN ANGEL, who will take them, and make them go in unto thee to keep them alive.* And more examples of this form of speech might be easily produced from the same paraphrasts†.

Nonnus, who is referred by *Chronologers* to the *fifth century*, and who executed a paraphrase of *St. John's gospel* in *Greek hexameters*, has given such a representation of this transaction, as might naturally be expected from one desirous to throw

* Gen. vi. 20.

† *John* xii. 28, 29. *Then a voice came from heaven: I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. Upon which the multitude standing by, that heard it, said, It thundered. Others said: AN ANGEL hath SPOKEN to him. As in c. i. v. 52. of the same evangelist, the frequent communications of divine power to our Lord during his ministry, is represented under the strongly emblematical language of ANGELS ASCENDING AND DESCENDING TO THE SON OF MAN.*

a classic

a *classic* air over his performance, and to maintain a consistency with *their* modes of thinking, whose language he adopted. “A pool,” says he, “where the feverish person, seeing the water bubble up with SPONTANEOUS MOTION, washt away his distemper in the warm stream*.”

* Ευρύτης ασαμινθε, οπη κεκαῦμεν* ατηρ
 Αλμασιν αυτοματοισιν ιδων ορχυμενοι ἰδωρ,
 Οκποτι κυμαινοντι δεμας φαιδρυνε λοετρῳ,
 Θιεμα πεπαιτομετης απισσισατο κυματα (l. λυματα) ιωσυ,
 Φιετιρρι ιητηρ* ιδωι οδυτηφατοι ἰδωρ.

A superstitious adherence to the *letter* of the original, which had no conception of looking out for an easy and rational solution of this apparent inconsistency of the two accounts, in the *peculiarities* of *sentiment* or the *idioms* of *language*, produced the following remark of an annotator on the passage: “Paulo post vocat, *αυτοεικτοι ἰδωρ*. Sed “quomodò *suâ sponte*, siquidè, ut ait *Johannes*, ANGELUS “descendebat et movebat aquam? Crediderim Nonnum ALIA “EXEMPLA præ manibus habuisse, quæ nullam facerent “*Angeli* mentionem; vel (a ray of reason beginning to steal across his understanding) “aquam *αυτοεικτοι* appellat, quod *invisibili quâdam virtute non humanis artibus* moveretur.” In which he has my approbation and concurrence, as coinciding with the conceptions of his author.

The account, which *Prudentius* gives of this *pool*, may with propriety be subjoined:

*Morborum medicina latex, quem SPIRITUS horis
 Eructat variis, fusum RATIONE LATENTI.*

And

And who can deny the reasonableness and credibility of the circumstance as exhibited in *this* relation? Nor, I apprehend, would our *Evangelist*, had he not been educated in *Jewish* principles, have propounded, with the same fact before him, a narrative materially different from that of his poetical expositor, divested only of his embellishments. The assertion, that—*Whosoever first stept in after the troubling of the water, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had*—goes no further, in my opinion, than a mere declaration of the *reputed* efficacy of that mineral spring, for the strict truth of which our history is by no means responsible: and *the descent of an angel* was the obvious unavoidable solution of such a *phæ-nomenon*, as the *spontaneous fluctuation* of the pool, to a mind nurtured in the *Jewish* system of *theology*.

It must be thought extremely probable, that the *warmth* and *medical qualities* of the water had occasionally effected cures in *rheumatisms* and similar disorders, and had thereby excited an expectation of relief in other cases; but no circumstances in the *Apostle's* narrative imposes a restraint on my mind at least to conclude, that any *miraculous* restoration to health or soundness had been accomplished even in a single instance.

And

And the proneness* of all ages and nations to such credulity and superstition appears to rescue this interpretation, which is diffidently proposed to the judicious reader, from every imputation of improbability.

The following extract from a most respectable author will accede as no mean corroboration of these remarks.

“ From *Chester* I rode—to *Haliwell*; where I
 “ saw and drank of the so much famed water of
 “ *St. Winifred’s* well, which I knew not how to
 “ distinguish from common water.—Over it is a
 “ handsome stone building, and by it a chapel,
 “ where lie continually a great number of poor,
 “ lame, impotent people; more, I believe, to beg
 “ and receive the alms of strangers, that either
 “ out of curiosity or devotion come to visit and

* I once knew a person, who strenuously maintained, that a *conjuror* in the neighbourhood could raise *spirits* when he pleased; and that his own son-in-law and many others had been present at the time. When I declared my utter persuasion of the impossibility of such a power, he affirmed, that he would bring the *conjuror*, who often came to the town, to exhibit before me. I accepted the proposal, and promised moreover to reward the exhibitor with *ten guineas*, for a successful operation of his art. This was too critical a test for our *conjuror’s* manœuvres; and terminated the dispute. I heard no more of his performances.

“ see

“ see the well, than out of hope to receive much
 “ benefit by the use of this water; though the
 “ inhabitants of this place will tell you stories
 “ enough, very CONFIDENTLY and CIRCUM-
 “ STANTIALLY, OF LATELY DONE MIRACULOUS
 “ CURES by the use thereof: but I have learned,
 “ that to distrust is *nervus sapientiæ**:” alluding to
 the celebrated *trochaic* of *Epicharmus*:

Ναφε, και μεμνασ' απισειν· αβρα ταυτα των φρενων.

Upon the whole, the example here alledged, not only illustrates and supports the previous argument, but, if I do not deceive myself, may be justly proposed as a specimen of LIBERAL INTERPRETATION of the Scriptures, grounded upon a suitable apprehension of the value of *Hebrew* phraseology: and such an interpretation, as will appear, perhaps, on a competent estimation, not less unexceptionable in itself, than calculated to place many important passages of the *Jewish* and *Christian* revelations beyond the reach of *Sciolists* and *Sceptics* of every denomination.

Further: this proposition, which I am attempting to establish, will be ascertained to the *philolo-*

* *Ray's Itinerary*, p. 21. and this, it may be observed, at a time when the propensity to such *marvellous* faith was considerably impaired in the minds even of the vulgar in this country.

ger with indisputable evidence from an acquaintance with the *oriental* languages; and others, whose opportunities, or inclination has not furnished them with this criterion of authenticity, may reap abundant conviction from *Lightfoot's Talmudical illustrations of the New Testament*; who, beyond any other writer that has fallen under my notice, shews, with learning most profound and industry most unwearied*, the circumstantial correspondence of the *evangelical* narrations to the sayings, maxims, traditions, usages, and manners of the *Jewish* nation. No attestations of this nature, more minute, more copious, and more diversified, ever co-operated to the establishment of any *moral* and *political* truth whatever.

And, that I may not suffer to go by me a convenient opportunity of enforcing a congenial argument in favour of the *sacred writings*, I will further entreat the reader to consider, whether

* He was one of a host of extraordinary scholars, produced by the *Universities of England*, and particularly *Cambridge*, during the last century; to whose learning our indolent and puny age cannot, I am afraid, produce even a *tythe* of parallels. Let me specify a few *Cambridge-men*, that present themselves to memory. Bishops *Walton*, *Wilkins*, *Beveridge*, *Pearson*, and *Stillingfleet*, *Patrick*: *Mede*, *Cudworth*, *Lightfoot*, *Spenser*, *Castell*, *Barrow*, *Burnet*, and *Milton*.

the

the accordance of the multifarious *customs, persons, places, characters, incidents*, and other peculiar circumstances, thickly sown through the pages of these histories, and connected with the most polished age and nation of antiquity, productive of many illustrious authors, with whom a comparison may be instituted in this respect; whether, I say, the accordance of such a multiplicity of particulars with the contents of other authentic contemporary records, does not amount to a proof almost demonstrative, that the books in question were produced by writers of *that* time, well acquainted with the subject-matter of their respective performances.

But, before I conclude this *Section*, why should I hesitate to propose an additional specimen or two of similar interpretation, to the judgement of intelligent and candid *theologians*; those, I mean, who love a rational and liberal criticism of the *scriptures*, as the only possible method of recommending their contents to learned and inquisitive readers of every description, beyond the defence of circumscribed *creeds* and established *systems* of belief? For *creeds* and *systems*, the children of ignorance and the nurselings of authority, are doomed to mortality, like the perishable authors of their being; whilst *Truth* and *Reason*, the emanations of God himself, without the props of hu-
c man

man institutions, will continue, unimpaired as his own eternity, when the earth and the heavens shall be no more.

And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.*

The silence of the other *evangelists* respecting so remarkable a *phænomenon*, accepted in its literal intention, naturally inclines me to look out for an interpretation, that will mollify this difficulty, and fall in with the general character of the writers. Now it seems to me, (who labour at least to dig out truth from the mine) that the fortitude, which our Lord appears to have recovered in so sudden and unexpected a manner, would be attributed by a *Jew* to the interference of *Jehovah* through the mediation of an *angel*, in consequence of the predominant persuasion, interwoven with all the ideas of this people, that every *extraordinary event* in particular was the *immediate execution* of God himself.

To the same mode of solution I would willingly refer Acts xvi. 7. *And, having come to Mysia, they were attempting to go by Bithynia; and the SPIRIT suffered them not: that is, THEIR OWN JUDGEMENT, on maturer consideration, strongly assured them, that the purposes of their mission*

* Luke xxii. 43.

would not be promoted by what appeared to them an eligible measure.

A passage from *Xenophon's Apology for Socrates* will throw light on the text before us, and, according to my apprehension, will admit of no other acceptance.

“ But indeed*, says *Socrates*, though I have
“ already attempted even twice to consider of an
“ apology, the *dæmon* still opposes me:” i. e. my
secret conviction—my *conscience*—the deliberate and
impartial decision of my own *mind*. The philo-
sopher meant nothing more by this phrase, which
has produced so much dispute and speculation.

Hence also an observable declaration of our
Lord, recorded by *St. John*, appears in my judge-
ment, to admit an unforced and satisfactory ex-
planation.

* ΑΛΛΑ γὰρ μα δὲ, φαίνεται αὐτοῖς, καὶ δις ἤδη ἐπιχειροῦν μὲν σκοπεῖν περὶ τῆς ἀπολογίας, ἐναντιοῦται μοι τὸ δαιμόνιον. Sect. 4.

Homer, as in numberless other passages, thus expresses the judgement of *Diomedes*. Il. K. 365.

ΑΛΛ', ὅτε δὴ ταχ' ἐμίλλε μιν ἰσθαι φυλακίῃσι,
Φεύγων εἰς ἡμᾶς, τότε δὴ μιν ἐμβάλ' Ἀθήνη
Τυδείδῃ.

*When Dolon soon had mingled with the watch,
Quick-running to the ships; MINERVA SENT
AN IMPULSE TO THE BREAST of Tydeus' son.*

Henceforth ye will see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending to the son of man.*

By which I understand simply, that ye will be witnesses to *extraordinary communications of the Deity*, and to *frequent displays of divine power*.

Part of an address to his disciples, ascribed by *Ovid† to Pythagoras*, will supply a pleasing specimen of a congenial phraseology.

*Et, quoniam DEUS ora movet, sequar ora moventem
Ritè DEUM; Delphasque meos, IPSUMQUE RECLUDAM
ÆTHERA; et augustæ reserabo oracula mentis.*

*GOD prompts my lips, and I the call divine
Will duly follow. Lo! the portals high
Of ÆTHER'S SELF I OPEN, and disclose
The shrine orac'lar of celestial truth.*

But it is time to proceed with our *remarks*.

REMARK III.

No candid mind can desire, and no ingenuity could devise, a more convincing *internal evidence* of the validity of the *Gospel* narratives, than the **SUPERLATIVE PRE-EMINENCE** of their **MORA-**

* C. i. v. 52.

† Metam. xv. 143.

ality, in competition with the doctrines of *Gentile* philosophy, and the deductions of what is usually called *natural Religion*.

This topic, I am aware, has been amply discussed by a variety of writers of more leisure, more ability, more patience, and more industry, than myself. It remains, therefore, for me to exhibit only the statement of this argument in its true point of view; which is indeed very striking and well worthy of attention.

The precepts of *Christianity*, respecting the regulation of human life in every branch of duty, whether *relative* or *personal*, not only excel in sublimity of sentiment, and in suitableness to the great end of all morality, I mean, the refinement of the heart and the exaltation of character to the highest point attainable by our measure of rational intelligence;—the gospel precepts not only excel, I say, in these respects the morality of any *single* philosopher of antiquity, but the concentrated wisdom of *every* moralist and philosopher of *every* age and nation, even when purged from that mass of impurity, absurdity, and error, which so debases the systems of *heathen* discipline. This incontrovertible assertion is surely of prodigious moment, and impels the understanding with an irresistible force of evidence, without the counterbalance of, perhaps, a single particle

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of

of palpable imbecility and folly in its composition. Nor am I conscious of any hazard, of any rashness, in this position: I feel no fear of drawing upon myself an imputation of groundless confidence or childish partiality. The field, however, is open to the unbeliever; the diligence and wit of ages have been employed in furnishing him with armour for the combat: the challenge is made in form, and the contest is capable of decision. But it were vain to expect from him an open engagement on terms, which a knowledge of antiquity will convince him to be so utterly unequal. The true scholar is but too well assured from evidence most unequivocal, that our *Galilean* has brought down from the skies what *Socrates*, inferior only to the *Galilean*, wisht, but wisht in vain.

Yet one fallacy, which has probably misled the understandings of many enquirers on this subject, must not go undetected. Produce me the man, who can justly claim a superiority, in native endowments of intellect and heart, and the accomplishments of learning, to the *Platos*, the *Aristotles*, the *Xenophons*, the *Tullies*, of *Greece* and *Rome*. Is that, shall we suppose, within the compass of his capacity, which these heroes of literature and genius were unable to attain?—So then, to form a true judgement of the powers of *unassisted* reason
and

and the progress of *natural religion*, we ought, in all propriety and fairness, to recur to those systems of *morality*, which existed BEFORE the birth of *Christ*. THEY ALONE are the reasonable specimens of *those* powers;—the genuine criterion of *that* progress. The numerous schemes of *moral philosophy*, devised, or rather drawn up, beneath the sunshine of gospel light, have received too much illumination from that source of brightness, to pass with considerate examiners for a proper test of the abilities of man, unaided by revelation*. Yes: educated under those benign influences,

* To this purpose our great poet *Dryden* in his *religio laici*:

Vain wretched creature ! how art thou misled
 To think thy wit these godlike notions bred !
 These truths are not the product of thy mind,
 But dropp'd from Heaven, and of a nobler kind.
Reveal'd Religion first inform'd thy sight,
 And *Reason* saw not 'till Faith sprung the light.
 Hence all thy natural worship takes the source:
 'Tis *Revelation* what thou thinks't discourse.
 Else how com'st thou to see these truths so clear,
 Which so obscure to heathens did appear ?
 Not *Plato* these, nor *Aristotle* found ;
 Nor he whose wisdom oracles renown'd.
 Hast thou a wit so deep, or so sublime ?
 Or canst thou lower dive, or higher climb ?

influences, which *christianity* has shed on life and manners, we have imperceptibly imbibed a portion of it's vivifying spirit; and easily mistake that for an emanation of *unborrowed light*, which is but a *reflection* of a brighter luminary, unobserved merely from a long familiarity with it's effects. The fountain of living waters first flowed indeed only through the country of *Judea*; but has since distributed rivulets of health and vigour through every civilized region of the universe. Nay, further; the purer morality of the later *Grecian* schools, and the striking superiority discernible in the theories of modern times over those of the old philosophers, afford of themselves an incontrovertible demonstration, that the *waters of Israel* far transcend in salutary virtues *Arbana* and *Pharpar*, and all *the rivers of Damascus*.

To conclude: we will state the question in few words, and much it behoves the *deistical speculator* to return an answer, that will secure him a conscientious retention of his system.

Canst thou by reason more of *godhead* know
 Than *Plutarch*, *Seneca*, or *Cicero*?
 Those giant wits in happier ages born,
 When arms and arts did *Greece* and *Rome* adorn,
 Knew no such system; no such piles cou'd raise
 Of natural worship, built on prayer and praise
 To one sole God.

COULD

COULD the son of a *carpenter*—could a tribe of *fishermen*, unassisted by the peculiar favours of the Deity—thus outstrip the WHOLE ASSEMBLAGE of illustrious PHILOSOPHERS, and advance *morality* to perfection by a SINGLE EFFORT*.

Tossed about by the contending waves of *Gentile* philosophy, and wandering with an uncertain course under the malignant glimmerings of *natural religion*, my vessel flies for refuge into the haven of the *gospel*; where she may cast at length the anchor of her hope, and ride in safety.

* We may apply on the present occasion a sagacious remark of *Dionysius the Halicarnassian*, antt. Rom. vii. sub finem. Ολίγα μὲν γὰρ ἐπιτηδευματα περὶ θυσίας τε καὶ ἱερῶν ὁμοίως Ἑλλήσι καὶ βαρβάρῃς τινὰς ἐπιτίλει ἐνδίδεται, ἅπαντα δὲ πάντα πράττει ἀπιθανοί.

Quis casum meritis ascribere talibus audet ?

Hæc negat auctorem quis statuisse Deum ?

CLAUDIAN.

In confirmation of the preceding remarks, I would recommend to the reader's perusal some admirable reflections, delivered with equal strength and simplicity of reasoning, in DOCTOR CRAIG'S *Life of Christ*, pp. 138, 139. ed edition : which it were injurious to weaken by mutilated quotations.

REMARK

REMARK IV.

IF the moral *satyr*ist could pronounce with propriety of the philosophical maxim, *Know thyself*, that it *came down from heaven**; with much more justice may the advocates of *christianity* put in the claim of *cœlestial* extraction for these injunctions of its founder:

But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them, who curse you; do good to them, who hate you; and pray for them, who injuriously use you and persecute you†.

Such are the godlike precepts of our *christian* lawgiver! Hear him deliver the same lesson of the most pure and sublime morality with an energy still more pathetic, and a simplicity still more engaging:

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another‡.

A precept of such refined benevolence, which enjoins even the sacrifice of life itself in the cause of friendship§, could only stream from the over-

* ——— *è cielo descendit Γνωθὶ σεαυτὸν*:

JUVENAL. xi. 27.

† Matt. v. 44.

‡ John xiii. 34.

§ John xv. 13.

flowing fountain of universal and unbounded LOVE. For any other source of such a pure effusion I look round in vain*. The history of our species from the beginning of the world to this hour,—the systems of philosophers,—the theory of the human mind,—the deductions of experience,—the report of my own heart,—ALL unite in riveting me to *this* solution. What, possibly fabulous, antiquity in that instance† of their *Pylades* and *Orestes* could extol with such excess of panegyric, *Jesus of Nazareth* not only accomplisht in his own person, with every circumstance that could ennoble such a dignified display of love and friendship, but requires also of his disciples, as the unambiguous test of their adherence to his cause, and their worthy profession of his name and doctrine. In this respect even the law of *Moses* will bear no competition with the pre-eminent merit of the gospel‡: and

* See John v. 19. Col. ii. 9.

† *Unus erat Pylades, unus qui mallet Orestes
Ipse mori : lis una fuit per sæcula mortis,
Alter quòd raperet fatum, non cederet alter.*

Manil. ii. 588.

‡ Matt. v. 43. Juv. Sat. xiv. 103.

*Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti;
Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos.*

all

all other founders of sects and fathers of doctrine, as far as my acquaintance with them has extended, of whatever age and nation*, have mixed with their systems, in a greater or less portion, some unpropitious and corrosive ingredients,—some bitterness of *party zeal*,—some sour infusion of *excluding and persecuting principles*.—And alas! how inadequately have even the followers of *Jesus* profited, either by the example or the commandment of their master! Those rankling disorders of the heart, which his tenderness and love was ever assiduous to soothe by mollifying instillations of *oil and wine*, his infatuated false disciples have so inflamed by animosities and hatred, that, in some periods of the *Christian* history, the body of

* *Sele's* benevolence was of a *Judaical* complexion :

Εὐαὶ δὲ γλυκεῖα ἡδὲ φίλαι, ἰχθύεσσι δὲ πικρὰ·
Τοῖσι μὲν αὖθις, τοῖσι δὲ θάσσιν ἰσθίει.

To the same purpose *Aristotle*, rhet. i. 9, 3. Καὶ τὸ τὰς ἐχθρὰς παρατρέχειν καὶ φίλῃ, καὶ μὴ καταλλαττεισθῆναι· τὸ τι γὰρ αὐταπειθεῖν δύναται· τὸ δὲ θάσσειν, καλῶς· καὶ αὖθις, τὸ μὴ ἑπείχεσθαι.

Compare also the following remark of the *Stagyrite* in the same work. i. 7. 2. Καὶ τὸ ἐν πάσχειν τὸ ἐν ποιεῖν δοξάζειν καὶ ἀρετῶν ἐκείνῃ· τὸ μὲν γὰρ, καὶ λαιστῆρι, ἀρετίζεται· ποιεῖν δ' ἐν λαίμακι τὸ δύναιτο φασίαι· with Matt. vi. 3. Acts xx. 35. though this untravelled reasoner is there speaking, I acknowledge, not as a *philosopher*, but as a *rhetorician*.

his

his *Church* has been little else than a noisome mass of wound, and bruise, and running sore*.

Next to this doctrine of *unlimited benevolence*, in dignity and usefulness, and alike demonstrative of the purity and magnanimity of it's author, is the doctrine of *the forgiveness of injuries*.

Peter said: Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?

Jesus saith unto him: I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven†.

Every reader of sensibility and taste, at the same time that his *heart burns within him* at the generosity and goodness of the *preceptor*, must be delighted with the *language* of the *precept*, redolent of the pure simplicity of ancient times; and proclaiming, beyond the reach of art and even the suspicion of spurious fabrication, the legitimacy of it's extraction *from above*.

The *parable* too, by which this noble precept is enforced, may be recommended to the reader, as exquisitely beautiful and engaging; the undoubted production of a mind intimately acquainted with the passions and propensities of the human heart.

* Isaiah i. 6.

† Matt. xviii. 21, 22. and to the same purpose other passages might be alledged, if necessary.

Should

Should the *deist*, like *Baal's* prophets, call upon his *natural religion* for such *proofs* of *divine wisdom*, such specimens of *cœlestial morality*, *from morning until noon*, no voice would be returned to his cries ; no answer given. If even *Moses*, the oracle of the *Jews*, is willing to acknowledge the superiority of our *Christian* lawgiver, much more must the disciples of *natural religion* decline this unequal competition. But the *Hebrew* teacher has *already* borne an unaffected involuntary testimony to the transcendant merits of the messenger of the *new covenant*, by the mouth of the *Jewish* officers, who were sent to apprehend our Lord: NEVER MAN, said they, SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN*.

Nor must I omit to mention, under the head of this *remark*, the consolatory assurances, which the *gospels* abundantly supply, of the *goodness*, the *mercy*, the *placability*, of the *divine nature*; of the exceeding great love of the *Creator* for his *creatures*, and his earnest desire of their temporal and eternal welfare: in which praise the *Hebrew scriptures* must share with the *evangelical*. On the other hand, it is too well known to make any specification needful, what gloomy and frightful conceptions the generality of *heathens* entertained

* John vii, 46.

of the *deity*, (in which they have been unhappily imitated by the *papists* of succeeding times, and the morose fanatics of other churches) endeavouring to appease his wrath by sacrifices of the most horrid kind, by flagellations, penances, and every species of self-tormenting superstitions; as if the benevolent Ruler of the Universe could delight, like grim *Moloch* besmeared with blood, in the miseries of his subjects; as if the *father of all flesh* could be offended without a fault, and ruled the families of men with an iron rod of more than tyrannical ferocity :

—— Antiphates trepidi laris, et Polyphemus.

As, however, it is not my wish to recommend the *gospel* by the defamation of *gentilism*, nor weakly to endeavour the advancement of the truth, by concealment or disguise; we must allow, that some *heathen* writers entertained much more honourable sentiments of the *divinity*; though this concession must principally be restricted in favour of those authors, who lived in times that enabled them to fill their urns at the fountain of revealed light. Indeed; such alone, if I mistake not, maintain the sufficiency of *repentance* only, and *resolution* of *amendment*, to the forgiveness and favour of God. To this purpose is that illustrious passage
in

in *Phornutus*, concerning the nature of the gods*: They denominate also *Jupiter* THE PLACABLE, from his disposition to relent towards those, who forsake iniquity: for he cannot possibly continue irreconcilable to such. And on this account also, there are altars erected to *Jupiter* THE GOD OF SUPPLIANTS.

To which may be subjoined a remark of the scholiast on *Aristophanes*†: Amendment is a sufficient declaration, that the offence was involuntary: i. e. in opposition to conscience and conviction.

For these reasons we may be indulged, as we pass along, with expressing a more than ordinary surprize, that modern *Christians* should relapse into the very filth of *heathenism*, and imagine the sacrifice of *Jesus* on the cross absolutely necessary to appease the wrath of God, to satisfy his justice, and render him placable to the human

* Cap. 11. edit. Gale. Προχαρσιυεσι δε και μελιχεν τον Δια, ευμελικιον οντα ταις εξ αδικιας μετατιθεμενοις· εδε γαρ αδιαλλακτως εχοι περ αυτης. Δια τυτο γαρ και Ικισιη Διου εισι βωμοι.

On this topic some beautiful verses in *Seneca's Agamemnon*, v. 240. are well worthy of quotation.

Referamur illuc, undè non decuit priùs

Abire: vel nunc casta repetatur fides.

Nam scra nunquàm est ad bonos mores via.

Quem poenitet peccasse, penè est innocens.

† On the *Plutus*, v. 779. ΑΛΛ' αυτα παντα—

race; as if repentance and reformation were not adequate inducements with our heavenly Father, whose *tender mercies are over all his works*, to re-admit his alienated children into favour and protection!

REMARK V.

AN admired ancient has observed, with no less propriety of thought than elegant simplicity of diction, that “the word of *truth* is recommended “by its *plainness* and *perspicuity*; requiring no “subtleties of argument, no embellishments of “rhetoric, to produce conviction*.” TRUTH, it should seem, is in unison with the constitutional movements of our nature, and takes by a direct approach instantaneous possession of the heart.

In *this* view the *doctrines* of the *gospel* deserve the highest applause, and approbation. They are propounded to us in terms of all possible simplicity; and come accompanied by motives so plain, so reasonable, and so cogent, as to speak, one would imagine, with irresistible emphasis of per-

* Eurip. Phœn. 483.

Ἀπλῆς ὁ μῦθος τῆς ἀληθείας ἴφρ,
Κοῦ ποικίλων διὰ τὰν διχ' ἐμνηστεύων.

suasion to every mind, not adulterated by *sophistry*, nor depraved by *vice**.

The universal rule of human conduct, delivered by our Lord, is **CONCISE** and **FULL**; liable to no mistake or misapplication.

Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them †.

Nor are subordinate duties enforced with less pregnancy and decision of precept.

Servants, be obedient to your masters, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men ‡.

Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a master in heaven §.

* *Minucius Felix* observes with his customary elegance, *Atque etiàm, quo imperitior sermo, hoc illustrior ratio est; quoniàm non fucatur pompâ facundiæ et gratiæ, sed, ut est, recti regulâ sustinetur: Sect. 16. To the same effect Arnobius, p. 34. edit. Lug. Bat. A. Sed ab indoctis hominibus et rudibus scripta sunt; et idcirco non sunt facili auditione credenda. B. Vide de magis hæc fortior causa sit cur illa sint nullis coinquinata mendaciis, mente simplici prodita, et ignarâ lenociniis ampliare. A. Trivialis et sordidus sermo est. B. Nunquam enim veritas sectata est fucum; nec quod exploratum et certum est circumduci se patitur orationis per ambitum longiorem. Collectiones, enthymemata, definitiones, omniaque illa ornamenta, quibus fides quæritur assertionis, suspicantes adjuvant, non veritatis liniamenta demonstrant.*

† *Matt. vii. 12. ‡ Eph. vi. 5, 7. § Col. iv. 1.*

A mul-

A multitude of other passages might be adduced in confirmation of this *Remark*: but they are well known; and I shall not multiply words in defending or explaining a position, which is level to every understanding, and will find an advocate in every breast. The charms of truth are but impaired by decoration.

REMARK VI.

Is it easy to conceive a point of doctrine more truly noble in itself; more interesting to human nature, and better calculated to inculcate more enlarged ideas of the *power* and *goodness* of the *Deity*, than the declaration of God's *indiscriminate* and *perpetual providence*, over *universal nature*;—over the innumerable tribes of inanimate and living things? But, if the *philosopher* contemplates with astonishment the sublimity of this conception, the *philologist* will be no less delighted with the dignified plainness of the *language*, in which it is arrayed by an evangelist:

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

* Matt. x. 29, 30.

Which shall we pronounce the more predominant feature in this striking picture of the supreme Being,—the *affection* of the *Parent*, or the *power* of the *Creator*?—And what less, suffer me to ask, what less could utter such glad and awful tidings to mankind, than a voice from the oracle of the *sanctuary*, *the bosom of God himself** ?

“God,” says *Newton* †, is all EYE, and EAR, and SENSE.” But this prince of philosophers, this glory, not of our nation only, but our species, refined his notions of the divinity from the favourite volume of his meditations; that volume, which had declared, that a *sparrow* ‡, nay even a *hair of the*

* John i. 18.

† Schol. Gen. in Princip. The whole passage deserves quotation. Totus est sui similis, totus oculus, totus auris, totus cerebrum, totus brachium, totus vis sentiendi, intelligendi et agendi, sed more minimè humano, more minimè corporeo, more nobis prorsùs incognito.

With this passage, one from *Pliny*, Nat. Hist. ii. 7. may very properly be compared. Quisquis est Deus, totus est sensus, totus visus, totus auditus, totus animæ, totus animi, totus sui.

‡ See Matt. x. 29, 30. Luke xxi. 18. This circumstance is touched upon with exquisite delicacy and tenderness in *Dibdin's Song of Poor Jack*; from a just conception, that such a beautiful and pathetic image would find a mirror in every bosom. The Saviour of mankind would have
given

the head could not fall to the ground without vibrating through the remotest corner of God's creation.

Some observations of *Alexander* the disciple of *Aristotle*, preserved by *Cyril of Alexandria*,* will form no unentertaining supplement to this *Remark*, especially to the *English* reader :

“ To say that God is not willing to exercise a
 “ *providence* over worldly things, is a position
 “ wholly foreign to his nature. It is *envy* alone
 “ or *unreasonable absurdity* in one, who is able to
 “ act better, to abstain. But, since both these
 “ affections are foreign to God, he can be influ-
 “ enced by neither. It remains, therefore, that
 “ he is both able and willing to exert a provi-
 “ dential care, and consequently exerts it. It is
 “ reasonable then to infer, that no event, however

given no applause to the satire of our poet, however exquisite it's humour,

Die and endow a college or a CAT :

but would have reseryed his approbation for that providential benignity, which laboured to rescue a favourite and persecuted animal from the cruelty of the *brute*, whether in the shape of *man* or *dog*.

* Pp. 61. 82 libb. ii. & iii. edit. Spanheim. Where *Cyril* observes, that some ascribe the same sentiments to *Plato*, but that *Zeno* and the *Stoics* unquestionably maintain them.

“ trivial, takes place without the divine appointment and pleasure.”

“ Nothing in the world comes to pass without a *providence*: for all things are full of the *divinity*, and it pervades the universe. So that all events take place according to the will of God; and to this the appearances themselves bear testimony. For the course of events, so regular as it is, affords a striking proof that these things are not by *chance*.”

REMARK VII.

NOR need the most sanguine admirer of *Christianity* desire a more convincing demonstration of the *divine understanding* of it's founder, a sharper weapon against the rage or malice of the adversaries of revelation, than the symptoms of wisdom, which display themselves in the following little history, delineated with such lively strokes of truth and nature.

Then one said unto him: Behold! thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

But he answered and said unto him that told him: Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

And

And he stretcht forth his hand towards his disciples, and said: Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

The precepts of *Jesus* oppose no dictate of our constitution, discourage no sensibility of nature, dissolve no tie of kindred or affection†. But our *heavenly* Father is of more consideration than our *earthly*; and the claims of purity, integrity, and virtue, are superior and antecedent, in the eye of reason and philosophy, even to the dearest attachments of consanguinity, whether of *wife, child, or parent*‡. The full, unequivocal, and decisive declaration, however, of this momentous truth was reserved for *Jesus Christ*, the word and wisdom of the Creator. Yet impartiality requires, that a philosopher of *Greece*, whose vigour and comprehension of intellect, whose sagacity of penetra-

* Matt. xii. 47.

† We may apply to them what *Themistius* has so elegantly commended in the Discourses of *Aristotle*: orat. xxxi. *Αγαπωσιν εν ει τα μειν πολλα και εκ αναγκαια, εν απολαυει τη θνητη το αθαιατοι, παρακρησιναι τε και αποκαθαρσιναι παντιως: τα δε οσα αμηχανοι εκπλυτα και εξιτηλα ποιησαι, και αιδ' ευκει χαρακται και ενδιδυκει εν τη βαθει, ταυτα δε επικοσμησιναι τε και επικαλλυνσιναι, και το σφοδρα εκφανεις αυτωι εξαλειψιναι.*

‡ Luke xiv. 26.

tion,

tion, closeness of reasoning, diligence of research, extent and variety of learning, have never yet been equalled, should not be defrauded of his portion of commendation. *Aristotle*, in a beautiful *Hymn* to VIRTUE, had already pronounced her to be of *more worth than gold and PARENTS**.

And does not an obvious reflection suggest itself on this occasion? Namely, that *philosophy* approximates by the same advances to the *perfection* of *morality* and to the *precepts* of the *gospel*; and that the great masters of *heathen* wisdom are more and more, in proportion to their excellence as teachers of virtue, *almost and altogether* CHRISTIANS. And what wonder? Truth, though exhibited in a different attire through the medium of a thousand intellects, refers her origin to the inexhaustible fountain of all perfection; as the rays of light, infinitely diversified as they may be in colour and direction, all diverge from the same candid and unremitting blaze of glory†.

* Χρὺς ἢ χρυσῷ καὶ γονεῶν.

† Unerring nature still divinely bright,
One clear unchanged and UNIVERSAL light.

POPE.

It is a beautiful remark of *Juvenal*, xiv. 321.

Nunquam aliud natura, aliud sapientia dicit :
NATURE and WISDOM the same doctrine teach.

REMARK

REMARK VIII.

The love of money, says the Apostle, is the root of all evil *. And a very superficial acquaintance with life and manners must evince the power of that sordid passion to corrupt every principle of virtue, and to deaden the most active propensities of our nature to mutual benevolence. “Cursed be the man,” says the voluptuous *Anacreon*, “who first set his affections upon MONEY. “This destroys the love of brethren: this extinguishes the reciprocal regard of parent and of child: this is the source of war and murder †.” Energy of language laudably expressive of the detestation of a generous spirit for such a groveling appetite! an appetite, whose peculiar operation is to absorb every *social feeling* of the soul, and convert the unhappy indulger of it into a monster of *selfishness* and *inhumanity*. Our Saviour proved himself to have a clear insight into it’s incredible influence upon the mind; and has

* 1 Tim. vi. 10.

† Απολοιτο πρωτὸν αὐτὸν

Ὁ τοῖς ἀργυροῖς φιλησας·

Δια τούτων καὶ ἀδελφοί,

Δια τούτων καὶ τοκεῖς·

Πολεμοί, φόβοι δὲ αὐτοῦ.

signified

signified that total indisposition to the genuine fruits of religion and virtue, it's uniform and legitimate offspring! by one of those remarkable specimens of figurative expression, so familiar to the phraseology of the *East*:

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God *.

This assertion alone would afford a satisfactory proof, independent of a multitude of others, that the favourite disciple was not blinded in his judgment by any groundless partiality for his master, when he declared of him, that **HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN** †.

REMARK IX.

THE following position in it's rigorous acceptance has appeared to many, no doubt, perfectly unwarrantable, and destitute of all reasonable probability; a mere *hyperbole* of rhetoric: upon more mature consideration, however, it will be found, I am persuaded, strictly conformable to the experience of daily life, and an undeniable demonstra-

* Matt. xix. 24.

† John ii. 25.

tion of a most accurate intuition into human manners.

And he said : Nay, Father Abraham ! but, if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him : If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

Nothing so clear and unquestionable, as that a disinclination to be persuaded will always start some ingenious cavil, will always devise some secret objection, to evade the force of the strongest argument. It is impossible to contradict a proposition, of which perpetual experience must furnish to every observer such abundant and irrefragable proof. As the excellent *Joseph Mede* somewhere insinuates, it is certain, that more must go to 'conviction, than *reason* and *demonstration*. Truth and good sense can procure no access to the avenues of the understanding through a heart enveloped by mists of prejudice, or stupified by the callous integuments of sensuality †. It is only the *purged*

* Luke xvi. 30, 31.

† See Matt. xiii. 15. Pers. Sat. 111. 32.

*Sed stupet, hic vitio, et fbris increvit opimum
Pingue.*

Aristophanes, Plut. 600. has expressed this idea with uncommon energy :

Ον γαρ πεισιν, εδ' ηι πεισιν.

ear,

ear, that listens; and the *single eye* alone, that delights to see. *Light* may come into the world, but *men* will love darkness rather than light, if their DEEDS ARE EVIL*.

It might be of service to be more circumstantial in my illustration of this assertion of our Lord, had not the subject been treated with ability and success by others. In the mean time, a believer of the gospel will congratulate himself on a DEMONSTRATION from FACT of the truth of this maxim, which wears such an appearance of unnatural exaggeration, soon after it was uttered. That *perverse generation*, who could hear with indifference or contempt the exhortations and reproofs of their heavenly instructor, and could behold with such obstinate incredulity his numerous exhibitions of godlike power, were not *persuaded* by the restoration of *Lazarus* to life†; and still continued to resist the most unequivocal evidences, openly displayed by the apostles, of the resurrection of that same *Jesus*, whom they had crucified, from the dead. In this connection that relation of *St. Matthew*, c. xxviii. v. 11—15. is perfectly credible, and accurately consonant to experience.

* John iii. 19.

† John xi. 46, 47.

And,

And, as they departed, behold! some of the guard went into the city, and brought word to the chief-priests of all that had been done: and they, after assembling and consulting with the elders, gave a good sum of money to the soldiers; telling them to say, “His disciples came by night, and stole him, “while we were asleep.”

The obduracy of wickedness has no limit to its progress. The *cloud*, at first no bigger than *a man's hand*, soon involves the whole horizon in obscurity. In such a case what alternative to persuasion can be discovered? The conduct of our Lord will ever recommend itself in *this* respect also as accurately consonant to the principles of consummate wisdom*. For *this* was the invariable tenour of his conduct; *this* was the uniform language of his addresses to the people: **WHOSO HATH EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR†.**

REMARK X.

THE *christian* religion began to deviate at an early period from the plain and exact standard

* Matt. xi. 19.

† It is sensibly remarked by *Philemon*:

Χαλεπον ακροαῖν; αὐτιῶ καθήμεν.
Υπο γὰρ αἰσίας εἶχ' ἑαυτὸν μεμφεῖται.

set

set forth by *Jesus* and his *Apostles*; and secular policy was soon busy in exerting its baneful interference in the government of a kingdom, which was expressly declared by its establisher not to be of THIS WORLD*. *Antichrist*, according to the prophecies concerning him, made haste to usurp a throne in *the temple of God*† himself, and presumed to promulgate laws, as the vicegerent of heaven, with a tone of absolute authority. This simple requisite of evangelical communion—I believe that *Jesus of Nazareth is the son of God*—might satisfy indeed *that* son of God himself, and those messengers, whom he commissioned to preach his name; but was deemed in no wise a *sufficient* declaration of religious faith by the succeeding *hierarchs* of the church. They were of opinion truly, in opposition to the declared sentiments of their master, that an unbounded *liberty* of *prophesying* would inevitably produce innumerable *corruptions* in religion; that TRUTH forsooth! would be injured by discussion; that the *eternal purpose* of God himself would be unable to continue firm without the salutary assistance of *penalties* and *restrictions*, to enforce conformity. Accordingly, the prop of *civil* power was called in

* John xviii. 36.

† ii Thess. ii. 4.

to unite it's imbecillity with the pillars of *divine* authority ; and an accession of new materials, of *wood* and *hay* and *stubble** was thought necessary to give *strength* and *solidity* to that adamantine fabric, already established on a *rock*, against which *the gates of death* would be unable to prevail. The most palpable *injustice* in a violation of the *perfect law of liberty*†, and a sacrilegious *usurpation of the divine prerogative*, were utterly disregarded by the devisers of these wholesome expedients as of *trivial* consideration, when contrasted with the *possibility* of mischief from an absolute freedom of opinion. Nay, upon a subject immediately allied to this; *Milton's* discourse on *the liberty of the press* is declared by a writer‡ of as strong faculties, perhaps, as our own, or any other, nation has produced, to have occasioned a *problem* in *politics*, not solvable by the *human* understanding §.

* 1. Cor. iii. 12.

† James i. 25.

‡ *Dr. Samuel Johnson.*

§ See *Milton's* Treatise, p. 7. and *Archdeacon Blackburne's* *Strictures on Dr. Johnson's Life of Milton*: a most acute but acrimonious performance, and a surprising instance of intellectual vigour in extreme old age! Our illustrious bard could not have found a more willing and able advocate. *His saltè m accumulem donis!* for this, and especially other services to the cause of religious liberty.

If this be a true decision, where can we so properly have recourse for the solution of a difficulty, which thus mocks, it seems, the capacity of the wisest *men*, as to that DIVINE UNDERSTANDING, so conspicuously exerted in the words and actions of JESUS CHRIST of *Nazareth*?

Hear then, ye tyrants over the consciences of *another's servants*, who *must stand or fall to their own master*, and not to you*; hear the decision of your Lord on this most arduous problem: a decision, fraught with *the wisdom from above*, to the complete exposure of your absurd expedients, and the eternal confusion of *antichristian* policy.

LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER UNTIL THE HARVEST; LEST, WHILE YE GATHER UP THE TARES, YE ROOT UP THE WHEAT ALSO WITH THEM†.

Be at least ingenuous enough to confess, your feelings in the words of the *comic* writer, adduced under the preceding *remark*: “We will not be *convinced*, even if you should *convince* us.”

* Rom. xiv. 4.

† Matt. xiii. 29, 30. See *Jeremy Taylor's* observations upon this text in numb. 6. sect. xiii. of that capital performance, *A Discourse on the Liberty of Prophesying*: 2d edition. Oh! that more of those brother *bishops*, who admire the *writer*, would imitate the *man*!

But

But my zeal for pure unfettered *Christianity* will not allow me to dismiss this important argument before I have offered a few more reflections, that suggest themselves, to the dispassionate consideration of my reader*.

Let us suppose some of the great philosophers of antiquity to be sitting in a room before us: *Socrates*, for example, with *Aristotle*, *Xenophon*, *Plato*, and, if you will, one or two more of the same stamp; children of *reason* and votaries of *virtue*. I would thus address them: “Some of
“our ancestors, *Græcian* sages! adopted certain
“notions of religious belief and polity, which
“numbers of my contemporaries have been con-
“tented to receive at their hands.”—It is well; they might reply: “They have, no doubt, fully
“considered them *before* they assented to their
“contents: every individual is possessed of an
“indefeasible right to regulate his own belief,
“and to profess those doctrines, which are the
“*deliberate* and *disinterested* result of his con-
“viction.”—But then, I should rejoin; “Not

* Whoever wishes to see the whole subject of *subscription to articles of faith*, most ably, elaborately, and fully discussed, must consult a late work on this subject by my most respectable and much valued friend MR. DYER, for *Johnson*, in *St. Paul's Church-yard*.

E

“content,

“ content, ye free enquirers into truth! with
 “ professing certain sentiments *themselves*, they
 “ insist that *others* also either conform to the
 “ standard of their doctrines, or be excluded, like
 “ aliens rather than fellow-citizens, from the be-
 “ nefits and comforts of the community*, in
 “ which they live ; exposed in many cases also to
 “ *fines and imprisonments.*”—Is it necessary now
 to request a reader, impregnated with the noble
 writings of these illustrious writers, to represent
 to himself the surprise and indignation, which
 such a flagrant and unrighteous tyranny would
 awaken in their bosoms†? And yet we shall find

* With good reason, I trow, has a facetious son of
orthodoxy, lately sung in the gaiety of his heart, *filled with*
the food and gladness of the church,

Be MINE the grape's PURE JUICE unmixt

With any base ingredient !

WATER to HERETICS I leave ;

SOUND CHURCHMEN have no need on't.

Salmagundi, 8vo. edit. p. 72.

Such are the exhilarating effects of *fat sops ecclesiastical !*

—— SATUR est, cùm dicit Horatius, *Evoe !*

† *Hoc igitur, quo tu Jovis aurem impellere tentas,*
Dic agetum Staio. “ Proh ! Jupiter ! O ! bone,” clamat,
Jupiter !” At sese non clamat Jupiter ipse ?

Persius, Sat. ii.

even

even *scholars*, who have boldly imbibed copious draughts at the pure fountains of ancient wisdom, (ah ! what unworthy disciples of such preceptors!) stand forth as the hardy champions of *ecclesiastical domination* and *spiritual oppression* in the face of such a mass of overbearing evidence, both from *reason* and from *scripture* ! Let others assign the motive for this prodigious solecism of conduct in men of letters and understanding. If my experience can at all assist them in the solution of this intricate problem, I shall not hesitate to declare, that I meet with not a single individual, at all distinguished for abilities and virtue, who is not shocked and confounded at these horrible invasions of liberty and conscience, EXCEPT THOSE ALONE immediately engaged, or expecting to be engaged, in promoting and enjoying the emoluments dependant on this system of iniquity and violence.

Again : The constitution of *civil society* in this country would convince me, independently of other arguments, and even that just stated, the invasion of God's prerogative, that the present condition of *religion*, as it generally subsists among us, is neither more nor less than genuine ANTI-CHRISTIANISM. Let me be as brief as possible on a point inexpressibly harrassing to a doating lover

lover of the gospel as it is in *Jesus**. Look at our *civil* governours : you will see rapacious devourers of the wealth of the community ; profligate and inefficient statesmen, directing all their efforts to aggrandise themselves and favourites ; fettering the trade and commerce of their country ; grinding the poor, and benefiting by their depravity, without one scheme for their comfortable subsistence, their instruction in useful knowledge, their redemption from vice and infamy.—Then turn your eyes from this horrid scene to our *spiritual* guides and teachers ; and content yourself with this single feature in the portrait :—*Bishops* and *Archbishops*, the servants of the PRINCE OF PEACE, at a juncture pregnant with calamity, at a moment of importance to the future happiness and liberties of the world, without a parallel in the annals of mankind—voting for WAR, in which even millions might perish by the sword and the executioner, when no pacific mediation had been attempted to avert so terrible an evil ; an evil that degrades the *human character* BELOW the brute†!!!

* *For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ : Phil. iii. 18.*

† *Indica tigris agit rabidá cum tigride pacem*

Perpetuam : sævis inter se convenit ursis.

Juvenal.

Now

Now, I ask, can the religion of *such* a state of society, be THE RELIGION OF THE GOSPEL? Are such *prelates* the *ministers* of JESUS? Yes; when *light* can incorporate with *darkness*—when *Christ* can have *fellowship* with *Belial*—then will such POLITY and RELIGION *meet together*;—then will such PRELACY and CHRISTIANITY *kiss each other*.

Un si bas, si honteux, si faux *Christianisme*,
Ne vaut pas des *Platons* l' eclaire *Paganisme*.

REMARK XI.

IF we survey the conduct of other fathers of systems, founders of sects, and heads of parties;—if we contemplate the means, which *they* have generally employed to procure reputation and allure followers; the mode of acting and teaching adopted by *Jesus Christ* will appear, perhaps, in this respect perfectly peculiar and without example. No forgers of the gospel narratives in question (whose motives in the first instance to such an imposition would not easily be ascertained) could have discovered any inducement, either from an acquaintance with human manners, or the operations of the human mind,

mind, to deliver such an extraordinary relation of the conduct of their hero. For my own part, I am able to devise no other tolerable solution of this difficulty, but this obvious supposition;—that the *gospel history* is in reality an accurate *transcript* from a TRUE ORIGINAL;—that such a personage as *Jesus of Nazareth* ACTUALLY APPEARED in the world; a genuine likeness of the picture, which is presented of him;—that he came with the express intention of publishing *such* a system of religion; of executing that unprecedented project of founding an universal empire over the affections and consciences of men, by the gentle constraints of *truth*, and the soothing captivations of *purity* and *love*.

Did *Jesus* allure his followers by ostentatious promises of wealth, power, reputation, or any temporal advantage whatsoever? Or was not the first and essential qualification of his disciples declared to be a relinquishment of every *worldly* expectation;—an abandonment for ever of the very idea, I do not say, of power, interest, and reputation, but even of ease and comfort? After his own example, who had not *where to lay his head*;—who endured every hardship, every danger and persecution, on his steep and rugged road to *Calvary*, where the bitter cup of his afflictions

flitions was emptied to the dregs ;—after such a pattern of calamity and sorrow, the followers also of this master were expected, if the service of the gospel required such a sacrifice, to leave *house and land*, and *parent*, and *child*, for his name's sake*—to encounter all those evils which the malice and bigotry of their countrymen could exercise upon them—to endure with patience those insults and *cruel mockings*, which have proved to spirits of sensibility a severer trial than even personal oppressions and corporeal torment—and to look daily, with a fearful expectation inseparable from humanity, as a *probable* event, for that same *baptism* of blood, in which he himself had been baptised†.

I will not withhold from the *English* reader a passage from the elegant *Lactantius*, in perfect harmony with the preceding observations †.

“ Besides, a disposition to fiction and deceit is
 “ connected with a lust of secular advantage, and
 “ a desire of gain; passions far removed from

* Matt. x. 37. Such was the language of *Virtue* to *Hercules*, Xen. mem. ii. Οὐκ εξαπατησὼν δὲ σὺ προσιμίοις ἡδονῆς, ἀλλ', ἥπερ οἱ θεοὶ διέθισαν, τὰ οὐτὰ διηγησομαι μετ' ἀληθείας. Τῶν γὰρ οὐτῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ καλῶν ὅδιν αἰεὶ ποιεῖς καὶ ἐπιμελείας θεοὶ διδάσιν ἀνθρώποις. See upon this subject Euseb. Dem. Evang. iii. 5. sub init. who argues the point very sensibly.

† Matt xx. 22.

† Lib. i. c. 4. De falsâ religione.

“ those

those holy men. For they so discharged the office
 “ delegated to them, as to relinquish every thing
 “ necessary for the support of life, without a pro-
 “ vision, not merely for futurity, but the passing
 “ day ; contented with the extemporaneous suste-
 “ nance, which God might supply: and not only
 “ reapt no benefit of gain, but even tortures
 “ and death itself. For the precepts of righteous-
 “ ness are bitter to men of vicious and depraved
 “ lives. Those, therefore, whose sins were con-
 “ victed and forbidden, procured their deaths with
 “ the bitterness of torment. These teachers then,
 “ who were free from the love of gain, were also
 “ free from every disposition and motive to im-
 “ posture.”

how, or why,
 Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
 Unask'd their pains, ungrateful their advice;
 STARVING their GAIN, and MARTYRDOM their
 PRICE*.

The intelligent reader will be able without any assistance from me to draw suitable inferences in favour of the proposition which I am maintaining, from the following topics laid down by *Aris-*

* *Dryden's Religio Laici.*

totle

totle in his treatise on *rhetoric*, written to *Alexander* *.

“ When the witness is suspected, it is our duty
 “ to shew, that he would not bear testimony to a
 “ falsehood from motives of favour, revenge, or
 “ gain. We ought also to explain the inexpedi-
 “ ency of testifying to a lie: for the benefits are
 “ small, but detection is of serious consequence,
 “ not only with respect to legal punishment, but
 “ loss of character and credibility.”

Our Lord also, on every occasion, most studiously avoided *popular applause*; nor did he hesitate to reprove with severity and boldness, before all the people, those professors, whose name and

* Sect. 16. edit. *Sylburgii*. It is delightful to observe the manly dignity with which our illustrious philosopher addresses the Conqueror of the world. *Αριστοτελης Αλεξανδρῷ ἐν πράττειν*. “ ARISTOTLE wisheth prosperity to ALEXANDER.” A tone of independance becoming a man of letters! How different from the adulation of a modern dedicator to one infinitely inferiour in accomplishments and greatness to the *Macedonian* monarch. To the SACRED MAJESTY—May it please your MAJESTY—Your MAJESTY’s most dutiful, most devoted, &c. subject and servant.” A *Græcian* patriot would have eyed us fulsome reptiles with a look of unutterable scorn. One is almost tempted to exclaim with *Horace*,

————— *Hos utinàm inter*
Heroas natum tellus me prima tulisset!

influence

influence would have been the most serviceable in promoting his secular interest and establishing his regal authority; and, in one instance, he retired with secret precipitation before that torrent of enthusiastic admiration, which would have borne him to a throne*.

By what model, I ask our adversaries, by what existing model could an impostor fashion such a character as this? What principle of *experience*, what analogy of *history*, what motive of *human action*, could furnish him with a suitable foundation for a superstructure so unexampled in all its parts?

Until a direct and explicit answer can be given to this question, as *sound philosophy* has taught me not to admit *more* causes than what are sufficient for the explanation of the *phænomena*, I feel myself compelled to conclude, that the life and actions of *Jesus Christ*, correspondent to the record transmitted of them in the *gospels*, were the undoubted *prototype* presented to the eye of our *evangelists*; and that this same *Jesus* truly was a *man*, *approved of God*, by *miracles*, and *wonders*, and *signs*, and rose from the grave on the third day, after he had been by *wicked hands* crucified and slain†.

* John vi. 15.

† Acts ii. 22—25.

REMARK XII.

THAT indirect method of conveying *instruction*, so frequently and happily employed by our Lord, displays, in my opinion, a wonderful combination of discretion, dexterity, and acuteness; and is on every account such as becomes the character of *a teacher sent from God*.

In this view, what can be more admirable, than that judgement and address, which uniformly endeavoured to call forth into action the *reasoning faculties* of his audience, and to invite the understanding to a due exertion of those powers, which characterise and dignify our species:

————— *aditus*, et quæ mollissima fandi
Tempora; quis rebus dexter *modus*.

When he intended to restore a bed-ridden *paralytic* to health and strength*, it were easy for him to say, *Arise and walk*; and the *miracle* itself would have been equally complete. But the constant object of this watchful servant of *Jehovah*, was the accomplishment of *all* the good within his power; and the occasion he judged favourable to an additional enforcement of his purpose. With an act of benevolence to the *body*, he was willing to unite an effort to illuminate the *soul*, in calling

* Matt. ix. 2—7.

the attention of the by-standers, by an indirect expression, to the nature of his character. His language, therefore, to the sick person was modelled accordingly: *Son! thy sins be forgiven thee.* A peculiarity of expression, calculated to draw on the inquisitive and ingenuous hearer to this conclusion; that the speaker claimed, by virtue of a heavenly commission, that high prerogative of the Divinity, *the forgiveness of sins*: and the miracles, which he was enabled to perform, ought in all reason to have convinced them at the same time, that he did not exercise this prerogative upon *false* pretensions; for *no man*, according to the just acknowledgement of the *Jewish Ruler*, *could do such things except God were with him**.

All the *parables* of our Lord furnish also abundant proofs of the justice of this *Remark*; and may be considered as so many judicious lessons, drawn up with infinite address, and eminently adapted to rouse the understandings, engage the affections, and touch the sensibility of his hearers by the most delicate strokes of nature and of passion. Indeed, we might almost venture an appeal for the authenticity of our Lord's pretensions to a heavenly designation, to his PARABLES ALONE.

* John iii. 2.

All are beautiful; the truest delineation of human manners, embellished with every grace which an unelaborate lovely simplicity of diction is able to bestow; graces, beyond the reach of the most studied artifice of composition: but *two* of the number shine among the rest with unrivalled splendor; and we may safely challenge the genius of antiquity to produce, from all his stores of elegance and beauty, such unaffected specimens of pathetic painting, as the *parables* of the *Prodigal Son*, and the *Good Samaritan*.

But I forbear to enlarge upon this subject. The *gospels* are in every body's hands; and the ingenious student of the scriptures will find in every page sufficient vouchers to the truth of my proposition. Let him make the application for himself; and build up his faith with those materials, which are so copiously laid before him.

REMARK XIII.

THE reception which the insidious contrivances and the premeditated sophistry of the learned professors among the *established clergy* of the *Jews* never failed to meet with from our Saviour, evinced a tranquillity of temper, which no provocation could derange; a quickness of recollection, which

The difficulty and danger of the dilemma, to which our Lord was reduced by his captious adversaries on this embarrassing occasion, are extremely obvious. To have pronounced an acquittal of the woman would have been not only a flagrant opposition to the express injunction of the *Mosaic* law upon this point, but such a palpable encouragement of a most criminal intercourse, subversive of all society, as must have totally destroyed his credit as a *moral* teacher among his countrymen. On the other hand, though no *judicial authority*, as a public magistrate, was invested in him, yet his popularity might have given his determination all the efficacy of a legal sentence; and the populace, in all probability, would have proceeded immediately to execute the punishment of their legislator, by stoning the criminal to

of our *evangelist*. See the whole transaction excellently commented upon and explained in the *second* volume of *Bishop Hurd's Sermons at Lincoln's-Inn*; and some pertinent remarks in *Mr. Paley's Philosophy*, book iii. chap. 4. a work, admirably calculated for utility, and propounding principles, which lead to more extensive conclusions, than the prudent author, for obvious reasons, was willing to infer. When I read such productions of such incomparable talents, as those possessed by *Mr. Paley*, I breathe the fervent wish of the *apocalyptic mystagogue*: *I would thou wert either COLD or HOT!*

death. Now the tumult itself, unavoidable in this case, and much more such an infringement of the authority of the *Roman* government, which had taken the power of inflicting capital punishments into their own hands, would have furnished the enemies of *Jesus* with a very fair pretence for an accusation of sedition, and rebellion against the state. What measures then could be pursued in so trying an emergency? And what ingenuity would not have felt itself at a loss for an expedient capable of securing it's own reputation, and disappointing the malice of it's adversaries, without affording any countenance to such a dangerous and sinful act? Observe then, whether our Lord did not display a presence of mind and a dexterity of invention, which nothing can exceed*. LET HIM, says he, *that is without sin among you, cast the first stone at her.*

Few

* With respect to his *writing upon the ground*, the written words might be something applicable to the occasion, and have their share in the confusion which ensued. *Lightfoot* (hor. heb. in locum) after observing from Num. v. 17, 23. that the priest, who examined the suspected wife, was enjoined to *bend* himself, and gather *dust* from the *floor* of the sanctuary to mix with the potion; and to *write* in a book the curses to be pronounced against her—subjoins: “In conformity to these directions, *Christ* also
bends

Few words, but fruitful materials for reflection! —Those sanctified hypocrites, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, hereby received a just rebuke for their uncharitable eagerness to fasten a stain on others, when they themselves were dyed so deeply in depravity. The arrow reacht the consciences, to which it was directed. The subsequent conduct of these hypocrites bore testimony to the poignancy of it's effect. *They went out one by one**.

“ *bends himself, uses the pavement as a book by writing*
 “ *something in the dust, levelled doubtless against the*
 “ *accusers, who were making trial of him; analogous to*
 “ *the curses written by the priest against the woman whose*
 “ *character was to be tried.*”

Some remarks of the *Scholiast* on *Aristophanes*, *Acharn.* 81. appear to me too pertinent to be neglected on this occasion.

Γραφω, παρατιλλομαι] γραφω μιν, καταγραφω, η ζωγραφω, απο της γης ξυνω τω δακτυλω, η τινι τοιωτω παιδιας τινος.—Ταυτα δε παντα ποιουσιν οι ΠΡΟΣΔΕΧΟΜΕΝΟΙ μιν τι, τον δε χρονον δαπανωντες εις αποριαν και αμηχανιαν, μη τυγχανοντες τω προςδοκωμενω λογισμω· οτι γαρ αυτοι εφ' ιαυτων τιθενται αλυοντες, και επι γης διαγραφουσιν.

* *Them thus intent Ithuriel with his spear*
Touch'd lightly : for no falsehood can endure
Touch of celestial temper, but returns
Of force to it's own likeness. Up they start,
Discover'd and surpriz'd.

Par. Lost, iv. 810.

Yet our Lord gave no sanction to *adultery*. The woman's guilt is clearly acknowledged, when leave is given to the *innocent* to put the law into execution against her. The inability of her adversaries to accept this condition does not prove, or imply, *her* innocence in the judgement of our Saviour. The infidel can make out no just exception to our Lord's character upon this ground. Indeed, he expressly tells the woman to *go and sin no more*.

But our antagonist will object; "He does not condemn her"—*Neither do I condemn thee*:—"And this," he will add, "amounts at least to an unpar-donable connivance at her transgression." To this it may be replied in the *first* place, that *he came not*, according to his own declaration, *into the world to condemn the world**, and to execute the office of a *secular magistrate*: (and it is but reasonable to try him by his own professed principles; in which, we think, no inconsistency can be found)—and, in the *next* place, any exercise of *judicial authority* would have stood in direct contradiction to that deference and subordination, which he constantly shewed in his own person,

* John iii. 17. viii. 15. xii. 47. Luke xii. 14—27.

and inculcated on others, to the power of the *civil* governour.

But I pass on to other considerations.

REMARK XIV.

ANOTHER incident, though comparatively trivial in itself, supplies us with no insignificant testimonial of a nobleness of mind, that will not allow any *selfish* considerations whatsoever to interfere with the respect antecedently due to propriety and merit. Sensible as our Lord must have been of *Martha's* officious assiduity to oblige him by providing a variety of dishes for his entertainment*; his superior love of intrinsic excellence and the higher virtues induced him to regard with sentiments of peculiar fondness and approbation the conduct of her sister, who was

* Luke x. 38. This interpretation was first suggested, as far as I know, by *Bishop Pearce*, and is scouted by some as ridiculously contemptible and extravagantly childish; worthy themselves of ridicule, as exhibiting thereby a pregnant proof of super-abundant ignorance of our Saviour's habits, and the manners and language of that time and country.

Derisor potius quàm deridendus senex.

sitting at his feet, imbibing with an eager fond attention the gracious accents, that dropt from the lips of her preceptor. The suggestions of *vanity* could not soothe this impartial examiner of actions into a suppression of the *truth*; nor was the steady light of so pure a judgement to be broken by the obliquity of even personal attachment in union with those suggestions. His approbation of *Mary's* wisdom comes attended with a rebuke of her sister's indifference to more momentous objects; but a rebuke gentle and kind and delicate, suited to the sensibility of so affectionate a friend*.

Martha! Martha! thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

REMARK XV.

THE vigour of understanding, the undisturbed firmness of mind, and the resignation of soul to the will of Providence, manifested in that remarkable crisis, the *temptation* of our Saviour, constitute one of the most illustrious transactions in a life, distinguished throughout by every species

* See John xi. 5.

of wisdom, magnanimity, and virtue. In whatever light the *speculative theologian* may be inclined to view this apparently singular event, whether as a *vision*, a private *meditation*, or a *real action*; the æquanimity and address therein displayed will be precisely the *same*: and, if the unbeliever should feel disposed to regard the circumstance as a mere fiction of the relator, the difficulty will continue to pursue him; and some reasonable account of such admirable readiness and sagacity, such strength of argument, in a contemptible and uninformed *Jew*, will still demand a solution from the theorist and philosopher.

When the *tempter* urged *Jesus* to exert his power for the relief of that necessity, which must have been unusually pressing after so long an abstinence*, our Lord did not deny his ability
to

- * Admiring that judicious rule of *Horace*,

*Nec deus intersit nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit,*

*Never presume to make a god appear
But for a business worthy of a god,*

ROSCOMMON.

I always endeavour to find out a rational interpretation independent of *miraculous* interposition, whenever I can discover any countenance either in the *circumstances* of the *transaction* itself, or in the *phraseology* of
the

to perform the conversion of *stones into bread*; but represented the propriety of submission rather to the will and appointments of that Being, who had placed him in such a situation; intimating at the same time the absolute inefficacy in the end of any expedient in opposition to the intentions of the Almighty. *Man shall not live by bread*

the *narrative*. On this ground, it has sometimes occurred to me, that the *gospel history* would be disencumbered of no inconsiderable difficulty, if we could interpret this *abstinence* as *partial* only, and not a complete privation of *food* for the term of *forty days and forty nights*. The *baptist* abode in the *wilderness* as well as *Jesus*, Matt. iii. 1. and yet we are informed, that he sustained life with such nourishment as the place afforded, *locusts and wild honey*. But *this* information appears to have been merely *incidental*, and is not noticed by *Luke*; without it, however, if the mere *letter* of scripture must restrict us, we should have concluded, that the *baptist* not only *fasted forty days and forty nights*, but *all* the days and nights of his *life*, because our Lord himself has asserted, that JOHN came NEITHER EATING NOR DRINKING: Math. xi. 18.—In much the same unqualified language we are informed by St. *Luke*, Acts xxvii. 33. that the crew of their ship continued WITHOUT FOOD *thirteen days* compleat. But do we not immediately understand by this, that the ship's people had not taken their *regular* and *full meals* throughout this period? See some strictures on this passage of the *Acts* in the *fourth* part of my *Silva Critica*.

alone,

alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

A sublime sentiment! dictating at once a most serious and useful lesson to mankind, and declaratory of his own determination to obey his father's injunctions in their utmost rigour; to be *poor* himself, that his followers might be *rich*; to exert his powers, not for his *own* benefit and convenience, but for the good of *others*; fainting *himself* with the extremity of hunger, whilst he created food for *multitudes* in a wilderness.

The next effort of the *tempter* was not less insidious; and in truth a most dangerous snare for a vain and ambitious spirit. Had *Jesus* thrown himself down from *the battlements of the temple* among the crouds below, and escaped unhurt by the sustaining arm of the Deity; such a miraculous exhibition could not have failed to engage the attention of the people in his favour, as vulgar minds are more easily captivated by feats of *ostentation* than *beneficence*: and this admiration of the multitudes would have opened a wide door to any projects of ambition. But, notwithstanding the direct words of *scripture*, which were produced in justification of this proposal, our Lord

* Matt. iv. 1—11.

was too well acquainted with the terms of divine favour and support, and with the uses, for which his supernatural endowments were conferred upon him, to be baffled and seduced by such an artful insinuation. *Thou shalt not tempt, says he, the Lord thy God.*

In conformity with this noble declaration, *Jesus Christ* was most cautious on every occasion to render no interference of *miraculous power* necessary in his behalf. He never gave way to the enthusiastic admiration of the populace, who were disposed to hail him as their King: he provoked no dangers, (from which only a miracle might have extricated him) that could possibly bring on, during the immaturity of his ministry, that catastrophe of his crucifixion before the hour appointed by his Father: and acquiesced in the desertion of his *twelve* faithless cowardly disciples, when a single petition could have called from heaven as many *legions of angels* to his assistance.

The *tempter* made his last appeal to that passion for power and grandeur and distinction, which has domineered with such universal sway over the hearts even of the generous and noble, in all times and countries; and daily alienates the affections of so many thousands from the *Creator* to the *creature*. The *Apostle* has remarked, with
equal

equal truth and beauty, that *the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world**. But that *pestilence*, which destroys, to borrow *Solomon's* expression, so *many strong men*, and spreads perpetual devastation both in *the darkness* and at *noon-day*, was unable to communicate it's contaminating influence to the vigorous and healthful constitution of this *Man of God*. The very idea of forsaking his allegiance to his Maker (the almost unavoidable consequence of enjoying *the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them*) was unspeakably offensive to this pattern of constancy and faithfulness—this dutiful son and servant of the most High God. He replies with the quickness of a wounded and indignant spirit: *Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

From this last reply in particular it seems obvious and reasonable to infer, that our Saviour, during this temptation, had searched his own heart with minute and diligent inspection;—that he had consummated his determination to render his future life in all it's circumstances correspondent to his resolutions at the present crisis with invariable adherence. Towards the conclusion of

* 1 John iii. 16.

his career, the impression, which the horrors of an agonizing death are recorded to have made on so lively an imagination and on feelings so tremulously susceptible of agitation, appear to have brought with it some danger of defection from his uniform steadiness of conduct: but his *willing spirit*, after a temporary conflict with the weaknesses of the *flesh*, recovered it's serenity and firmness. *Arise*, said he: *let us depart*: “ I am
“ prepared to do, and to suffer, the whole will of
“ God. I will welcome even the cross itself, as
“ the criterion of my obedience—as my passport
“ to immortality and glory.”

I would not willingly entertain an unreasonable partiality even for the character of *Jesus Christ* himself; but I should offer violence to my own feelings and an insult to the truth, did I not ingenuously declare, that his conduct on all occasions, but especially at a juncture of *difficulty* and *danger*, excites within me a mingled inexpressible sensation of astonishment and delight. My heart, in the language of the *scriptures*, may be truly said *to leap for joy*. It's inward emotions correspond to the outward expressions of the transported cripple, when he found himself healed by the word of *Peter*; as they are described in terms, so lively and significant, as nothing less than *ocular observation* seems able to have suggested:

gested: *And the lame man* LEAPING UP, STOOD, and WALKT; and entered with them into the temple, WALKING, and LEAPING, and PRAISING GOD*.

REMARK XVI.

IN the next place, let an impartial reader peruse the pages of *gospel history*, and observe the treatment, which our Lord was perpetually receiving from his countrymen, in return for his repeated and solicitous endeavours to reclaim *them* from ignorance and sin to the blessings of *evangelical salvation*:—let him behold this meek and peaceable, this affectionate, and zealous prophet of the *glad tidings* of mercy and immortality—this gracious messenger of love, with health and comfort attendant on his steps,—insulted for the meanness of his parentage and occupation, the obscurity of his native place†, the insignificance and

* Acts iii. 8.

† It is astonishing with what sincerity we can condemn this absurdity of the *Nazarenes*, and pursue the same conduct ourselves with the most perfect cordiality and complacency imaginable. I accidentally opened at the bookseller's a day or two ago, a pamphlet in opposition to the *new notions* of government, &c, by *Richard Hey*, Esq. of the

and vileness of his followers, with an addition, no doubt, of many aggravating circumstances not recorded by the brief historians of his life,—many

the *Middle Temple*; and the first passage, which occurred to my eye, was to the following purport: “It would be well, if the reader, before he peruses the works of *Thomas Paine*, would look over his life by *Mr. Oldys*.” Now this single sentence is enough with me to damn his whole performance, independent of the suspicion, with which every dispassionate and candid mind will receive injurious reports against one, whom every tongue is employed to calumniate, and every hand to blacken. Granting every idle story to be true, who asks such questions as these, *Can any good thing come from THOMAS PAINE? Is not this the STAY-MAKER?* who asks *these* questions, I say, but *Nazarenes?* A *philosopher*, and a genuine *lover of truth*, but above all a *Christian*, who professes himself the disciple of a *carpenter’s son*, considers the *argument* alone; and will disdain to embroil a political question with the *personal character* of the author. In my opinion, there cannot be a stronger presumptive proof, that a reasoner of this sort, who is like *Mr. Hey* a man of real understanding, has either some *interest* in defending the reigning corruptions, or feels the arguments of his adversary to be incapable of confutation. I would recommend a view of the condition of the common people, especially in the *metropolis*, to these soothing advisers of acquiescence to the established system; and then let him ask himself, if *these* are the fruits of a *free government*, if these are the symptoms of a *happy constitution*. None of your *sophistical soporifics* for me!

incom-

incommunicable exasperations, that convey the sharpest wounds to a generous spirit, but are obvious only to *spectators**:—then turn your eyes to a series of harsher sufferings; and observe him more than once in danger of being stoned on the spot by an enraged populace, and compelled to conceal himself from their resentment; and this only for attempting to remove their prejudices and lead them to an acknowledgement of salutary truth, attested by numerous acts of supernatural benevolence:—finally, observe the scoffs and ridicule, the bitterness of insult, the brutality of usage, which the fruitful malignity of triumphant enemies, both aliens and countrymen, lavisht on him after his apprehension by the *Jewish* officers:—but, above all, contemplate the taunting pleasantries of those monsters of inhumanity, the *rabbies* and the *clergy*, the *chief priests* and *scribes*, over this innocent victim of their malice, agonizing, as he then was, with the unspeakable tortures of the cross:—then, after such survey,

* Πολλα γαρ αν ποιησειεν ο τυπτων, (and we may add ο ιπη-
ριαζων)—ων ο παθων ενια ηδ' αν απαγγελται δυναιθ' ιτιρω, τη σχη-
ματι, τη βλεμματι, τη φωνη.—Ταυτα κινει, ταυτα εξιστησι ανθρωπος
αυλων. *Demosthenes in Midiam*.—And the author of the
Epistle to the Hebrews, xi. 36. does not scruple to rank
cruel mockings among the most serious persecutions, by
which humanity can be assailed.

let

let the dispassionate examiner of this scene of suffering bring the matter home to his own bosom, and candidly ask himself, what *his* sensations would have been in the same circumstances of unprovoked and unrelenting persecution—what his reflections in the midst of such indignities and cruelties in return for *such* a conduct? Surely, without any violation of candour, without any irrational partiality for a favourite character, I may presume to answer for our supposed arbiter, that *some* emotions of *vexation* and *resentment*,—*some* symptoms of *human passion*, would have rebelled in *his* breast, conscious to itself of every generous and meritorious affection, every intention of benevolence and good-will to the whole human race*. At least, one may almost venture to pronounce decisively, that the predominant sensations of *his* soul would *not* have been such a calm composition of kindness, complacency, resignation, compassion, and forgiveness: nor would *his* lips have found leisure, in such agonies of body and perturbation of spirit, to present a pe-

* This hypothesis will receive some illustration from the case of the apostle *Paul*, as related by his companion *Luke* in Acts xxiii. 3.—*Pausanias*, iv. 11. has a just remark : Ἀπορία τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις καὶ ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἡδὴ καὶ οὐγὴ γίνταί· πεφυκάσι δὲ πῶς οἱ ἀνθρώποι μάλιστ' ἔχειν ἀκρατῶς τὰ παρ' ἀξίαν.

titution to the throne of mercy for his malignant and unfeeling *murderers*: FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO*.

That *Græcian* virtue may not be defrauded of her deserved praise, impartiality demands the production of a little piece of history from *Ælian*, which will certainly be acceptable to every reader†.

“ *Phocion*, the son of *Phocus*, who had often
“ been commander in chief, was condemned to
“ death, and was going to drink the hemlock in
“ prison. When the officer held out the cup,
“ his friends askt him, whether he had any thing

* Luke xxiii. 34. It may be no unentertaining addition to *this remark*, if I bring forwards a specimen of very different deportment in circumstances not dissimilar. From *Lysias*, for example, in his oration against *Agoratus*, p. 469. edit. *Reiske*. Εναρτιος δε—κτλ. “ In the presence of my sister,
“ *Dionusodorus* at the point of death was settling his pri-
“ vate affairs, and saying of this *Agoratus*, that he was the
“ cause of his death, and charging me and this *Dionysius*
“ his brother and all his friends, to AVENGE him on *Ago-*
“ *ratus*; and charged also his wife, supposed to be then
“ pregnant, to tell the child, that *Agoratus* slew his fa-
“ ther, and to order him to take vengeance on the man as
“ a murderer.”

† Var. hist. xii. 49. where *Perizonius* observes, that *Plutarch* also has recorded in his *apothegms* this answer of *Phocion*.

“ to

“ to say to his son. Yes, said he; *I charge him*
 “ *to entertain NO RESENTMENT against the Athe-*
 “ *nians for this pledge of their good-will, which I*
 “ *am going to drink.*” Now whosoever does not
 extol and admire the man exceedingly, ap-
 pears to me destitute of understanding and sen-
 sibility; says my author.

The *protomartyr Stephen** had so learned *this*
 lesson also of his master as to *practise* it in his
 turn with complete efficiency. *He knelt down and*
cried with a loud voice: Lord! LAY NOT THIS
SIN TO THEIR CHARGE! And, on saying this, he
fell asleep.

REMARK XVII.

THE influence of long and early associations
 upon the mind unavoidably produces *some* degree
 of attachment to our *native country*: but a mere
local affection seems, in the eye of abstract philo-
 sophy, entitled to no praise, and indeed rather
 incompatible with true dignity of sentiment. The
 regard which the great exemplar of wisdom† in

* Acts vii. 60.

† ——— quid virtus et quid SAPIENTIA possit
 Utile proposuit nobis EXEMPLAR ULYSSEM.

Horat.

the

the records of antiquity expresses for *his* native island, appears, as with most other men, a compound of good sense and weakness. “My *Ithaca*,” says *Ulysses*, “is rough and barren, but an excellent nurse of men: nor have I seen in all my wanderings a more delicious country*.”

Our Saviour betrayed no symptoms of irrational attachment or unmanly prejudice in this respect, but acted up to the perfect standard of wisdom and magnanimity. His conduct, ever uniformly noble, may be compared not unfitly to the texture of his own vestment; *without seam, woven from the top throughout*†. At all times, and in every

* Od. I. 27.

Τρηχὺν, ἀλλ' ἀγαθὴν κεκοιρανισμένην ἐν γυναι
Ἡς γαίης δυναμαὶ γλοκερωμένοι ἀλλοι ἰδισθαι.

*Low lies our isle, yet blest in fruitful stores;
Strong are her sons, though rocky are her shores.*

Pope.

† John xix. 23. woven for him, no doubt, by the tender solicitude of his mother, or the fond hands of some of the female disciples, who attended him.

————— *nec te tua funera MATER
Produxi, pressive oculos, aut vulnera lavi,
VESTE tegens, tibi quam noctes festina diesque
Urgebam, et telâ curas solabar aniles.*

Virg. *Æn.* ix.

every instance, an antecedent and innate regard for *worth* and *virtue* superseded every consideration of private connection with *place* or *person*, and called forth his testimony of unreserved commendation.

The *Roman* centurion, though of a country and a class of men most unfriendly to the *Jews*, (a nation inferior to none in their love of *liberty* and their veneration for *democratic* principles) displayed a conviction of our Lord's supernatural abilities, highly observable and eminently meritorious; a conviction, which seemed to pour consolation and refreshment on the spirit of *Jesus*, wearied out by the perversity and obduracy and malice of his countrymen. His feelings broke out on this occasion in the warm language of applause and admiration: *Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And*

*Nor did thy mother close thy eyes in death,
Compose thy limbs, nor catch thy parting breath;
Nor bathe thy gaping wounds, nor cleanse the gore,
Nor throw the rich embroider'd mantle o'er;
The work that charm'd the cares of age away,
My task all night, my labour all the day:
The robe I wove, thy absence to sustain;
For thee, my child!—but wove alas! in vain.*

PITT.

I say

I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.*

To those but slenderly acquainted with *Jewish antiquities*, the inveterate antipathy of this people and the *Samaritans* to each other must be well known. Sufficient proofs indeed of this enmity may be discovered in the *gospel history* itself. Even two of our Lord's disciples, *James* and *John*, had profited so imperfectly by the benevolent precepts, the gentle dispositions, the kind actions, the complacent forbearing spirit, of their master, as to express an eagerness to call down *fire from heaven*† upon a village of *Samaritans*, who refused to entertain them.—And, on another occasion, the same disciples could not dissemble their astonishment, that *Jesus* should continue talking with a woman of *Samaria*: nor does the woman herself appear to have been less surprised; for we are told by the *evangelist*, that *the Jews* had no dealings with the *Samaritans*‡; and that the woman said, *Why dost thou, who art a Jew, ask water of me, who am a Samaritan?*

* Matt. viii. 10—13.

† Luke ix. 52.

‡ John iv. 9.

Yet in opposition to this hereditary and deep-rooted aversion to each other, imbibed with life and confirmed by education, our Saviour not only endeavours by animated rebuke*, by expostulation, and an express parable† to this purpose, to rouse the shame, to soften the animosity, and to enlarge the conceptions of his followers: but seizes with avidity, as it should seem, every opportunity of placing the *Samaritans* in the most favourable point of view, by a direct contrast with the behaviour of his countrymen. *Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.* And he, we are informed, was a *Samaritan*‡.

But notwithstanding this elevation of soul, which lookt beyond the low attractions of casual connection to the wide range of *universal* philanthropy; that pure and active flame, which warms and animates the feelings of a genuine PATRIOT, was not unkindled in the breast of the founder of the gospel. Nay, *Jesus* manifested even that unequivocal symptom of affection for his country, that demonstration of patriotical solicitude, which the sublime satyrist considers as the noblest proof

* Luke ix. 55.

† Luke x. 30.

‡ Luke xvii. 16—19.

of the characteristical sensations of humanity*. His agony of soul, excited by the melancholy prospect of the impending desolations of *Judea* and the destruction of that city, which was the residence of *Jehovah* and the glory of the earth, could find no relief but in a flood of tears†; succeeded by this most tender and impassioned apostrophe: *O! Ferusalem! Ferusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and ye would not‡.*

We may observe also in passing, his perfect superiority to every suggestion of pride, passion, and resentment, in thus commiserating a city, which had exercised towards him such contumely, such injury, and ingratitude in former instances; and, as he well knew, would in a few days, with an accumulation of insult and cruelty, consummate their malignity by nailing him to a cross.

* Juv. Sat. xv. 131.

————— *mollissima corda*

Humano generi dare se natura fatetur,

Quæ lachrymas dedit: hæc nostri pars optima sensus.

† Luke xix. 41.

‡ Matt. xxiii. 37.

Nor would an advocate for the supreme excellence of our Lord's character hold himself justified in letting slip so fair an occasion of inculcating, how great an accession of lustre it receives from this melting sympathy of disposition, exemplified also in other junctures of his life*. That entertaining and useful compiler *Suidas* has preserved for us an excellent *hemistich* of an unknown writer to this effect :

————— αγαθοι δ' αριδακρυεις ανδρες.

'Tis a sure sign of WORTH to melt in TEARS.

It is, therefore, with perfect propriety and from a just insight into truth and nature, that *Lycophron* has aggravated an odious character from this topic † :

*Hard wretch ! of brow austere, by smiles unbent,
By TEARS UNWET ; estrang'd alike from betb.*

Let the reader, therefore, determine for himself, whether the account, which *Porphry*‡ has

* See my *Silva Critica*, part ii. sect. xcvi.

† ————— ὃ γελος ἀπεχθεται

Και δακρυ' οὐκ ἔστι καὶ τεταρμιν

Ἀμφου. *Cassand.* vers. 117.

‡ *Vit. Pythag.* sect. 35. edit. Kuster.

delivered

delivered of his hero *Pythagoras*, be in this respect so creditable as the biographer, no doubt, supposed, to that truly great and venerable philosopher; in my opinion, the most illustrious personage of *heathen* antiquity, that has come down to our knowledge.

“ His soul also, conformable to the invariable
 “ temperature of his bodily appearance and con-
 “ stitution, bespoke always the uniformity of his
 “ manners and affections from his countenance.
 “ For neither did it receive any diffusion from
 “ PLEASURE, nor contraction from UNEASINESS;
 “ nor was he ever discovered under any agitation
 “ of JOY or SORROW. No man saw him at any
 “ time EITHER SMILE OR WEEP.”

Our moral poet declares his sentiments in more commendable strains :

In lazy apathy let Stoics boast,
 Their virtue fix'd: 'tis fix'd as in a frost*.

But

* *Pope's Essay on Man.*—*Dr. John Jebb*, lost alas! too soon to his friends, to his country, and mankind! thus expresses himself, in his sermon on *the Excellency of the Spirit of Benevolence*, with a pathos beyond all praise, and highly symptomatic of his own tenderness and sensibility.

“ Glory not in the ferocity of thy nature: nor steel it
 “ against the soft sensations of pity and compassion.
 “ Better for thyself, as well as others, that thy heart should

But the disinterested magnanimity of the PATRIOT beamed forth with a lustre still more conspicuous at a time, when the sensations of humanity, without endangering an imputation of selfishness and degeneracy, might have been pardonably absorbed in the solitary contemplation of its own

“ overflow with the milk of human kindness ; better that
 “ thou shouldest melt at every tale of woe ;—than possess
 “ that unfeeling temper, which forbids thee to rejoice
 “ when thou hearest the voice of gladness ; Or withhold
 “ thy TEARS amidst the distresses of a creature of like pas-
 “ sions with thyself.”

Nor can I deny myself the pleasure, notwithstanding the tediousness of transcription, to communicate some elegant criticisms of *Eustathius* to the reader: in *Iliad*. p. 87. edit. Bas.

Συμπαθεῖς οἱ ἥρωες παρὰ τῷ ποιητῇ, καὶ ἰτοιμοδακρυῖς· καὶ ἐστὶ ἀγαθὴ ἡθὺς το τοῖστοι παρασηματικόν.—*The poet's heroes are full of sympathy, and prone to weeping, which is a symptom of good dispositions.* He then subjoins various proofs of his assertion from *Homer*, and adds: Καὶ ἄλλως δὲ, ὡς φασιν οἱ παλαιοί, εἶδεν καί ποτε καὶ Ἀχιλλεύς—δακρυῇ· ἔ γὰρ ἀπαθὴς ὁ σπένδειτο, ἀλλὰ μετριοπαθὴς.—Ὁ μὲν τοι παρὰ τῷ Σοφοκλεῖ Αἴας, εἶδε ἐπὶ τοῖς μεγίστοις τῶν κακῶν, ἰδακρυσεῖν· ἐμβριθὴς γὰρ ἔκειτο, καὶ μεγαλοδυνάμει, καὶ μανίας ἑγγύς. *Besides, as ancient critics have observed, it is no strange thing if Achilles weeps ; for the good man is not unfeeling, but of mild affections.—Yet Ajax in Sophocles did not weep even at the greatest misfortunes : for he was violent, of a haughty spirit, and bordering upon madness.*

Hominis est enim affici dolore, sentire, resistere tamēn, et solatia admittere ; non, solatiis non egeret. Plin. c. 1. lib. viii. 17.

absorbed

calamities*. But *Jesus of Nazareth* felt and thought, spake and acted, lived and died, for the good of OTHERS†. His heart, which was truly *human*‡, sympathizing with *all* the concerns of his fellow-creatures§, and only ceasing it's benevolent sensations with existence, was *tremblingly alive* to the interests of his *country*. His own sufferings, exquisite as they were, and whatever commiseration they might excite in others, could not seduce his attention for a single moment from what was to him a

* The judgement of the most finished poet in the universe has made a very apposite use of this topic in his incomparable description of the *plague* among the *beasts*:

Non lupus insidias explorat ovilia circum,
Nec gregibus nocturnus obambulat: ACRIOR illum
CURA domat. VIRGIL'S GEORG. iii. 537.

Aristotle, rhet. ii. 8. points out the topic with his customary perspicacity. Μητ' αυ φοβουμενοι σφοδρα· κ γαρ' ελεουσιν οι εκπληγμενοι, δια το εσσαι προ του οικειου παθει.

In this view, our Lord's attention to his disciples during his own dreadful conflict between *fear* and *duty*, is strongly commendatory of a benevolent and disinterested heart. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Matt. xxvi. 41.

† Nec sibi, sed toti genitum se credere mundo.

LUCAN. ii. 383.

‡ Heb. ii. 17.

§ *Homo sum; humani nihil à me alienum puto.*

TERENCE.

more

more momentous object. Amidst the wailings and lamentations of the surrounding multitude*, the mind of *Jesus* continues unshaken and serene, vacant to the operations of every finer feeling of benevolence; neglectful of itself, and wholly engrossed by the tenderest solicitude for the welfare of his countrymen. Worthy indeed of so divine a character was that pathetic address, (pathetic beyond all example, and fatally predictive!) of this dying patriot!

Daughters of Jerusalem! weep not FOR ME, but weep for YOURSELVES AND FOR YOUR CHILDREN. For behold! the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs

* This part of the gospel narrative holds forth a prominent feature of authenticity, in signaling the lamentations of the *women* on this occasion: *Sophocles* in his *Ajax* truly says:

——— κατὰ τοὶ φιλοκτιστοὶ γυνή.

Most prone to pity is the FEMALE BREAST.

And the same most noble writer dwells with circumstantial description on the supposed sorrow of the *mother* of *Ajax* upon hearing the news of that hero's death.

Ἡ πῦρ τάλαινα, τῆςδ' ὅταν κλυή φᾶτι,

Ἦσι μὲγαν κωκυτὸν ἐν πάσῃ πόλει :

v. 866.

When she my sad catastrophe shall know,

The streets will ring with shrieks of frantic woe.

In this view, Matt. xxvii. 55, 61. to which I refer, will appear extremely natural,

that

that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck!*

In connection with the foregoing illustrations, some further positions of the incomparably sagacious philosopher of *Stagyra*, whom we have before called to our assistance, will contribute to display the vast superiority of our *Saviour's* affections above the movements of vulgar minds. "Those, whose situation is entirely desperate
"and irretrievably calamitous," says this comprehensive speculator of human manners†, "are
"not inclined to *commiseration*, which has always
"a tacit reference to the possibility of similar suffering, contemplated in others, to ourselves:
"for they have already proceeded to the extremity of misfortune."

But this position, however applicable to the generality of mankind, was not realized in the the conduct of our Lord. Though on his road to *Calvary*, and certain of speedy crucifixion, his sensations of social benevolence and compassion

* Luke xxiii. '28, 29.

Of the same nature, and equally illustrative of our Lord's compassionate disposition, is that beautiful apostrophe, Matt. xxiv. 19. *But alas! for them that are with child, and them that give suck, in those days!*

† Rhetoric, lib. ii. cap. 8.

were

were alive in unabated vigour. Even then, in that sad hour of personal affliction, which filled up the measure of *mortal sufferance*; he transferred his eyes from the scene of present calamity to the future miseries of his countrymen. *Daughters of Jerusalem! weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.*

Again: when we consider our Lord's situation in another view, as detached from many of the most endearing ties of *domestic connection* and *consanguinity*, a subsequent remark of the consummate *rhetorician* will conduce to recommend the character of our hero: for these ties are the great handmaids of pity and compassion.

“ They also, who have parents, or *children*,
“ or *wives*, are inclined to pity; for these are a
“ man's own, and are liable to suffer misfortunes.”

REMARK XVIII.

THE *friendship* also, which our divine master entertained for his disciple *John*, is a topic too important to be entirely overlooked in this attempt to exhibit the excellencies of his character*.

* ΑΛΛ' ἔστι δὴ τις ἄλλος ἢ βροτεῖς ἰσως,
Ψυχῆς δικαίας, σωφροῦσι τε, καὶ γαθῆς. Euripides.

*The race of man another love controuls,
The love refin'd of pure and virtuous souls.*

However excursive the range of benevolence may be, embracing with extended regards every object of rational, and even irrational, creation; still she will require some fond bosom, as the repository of congenial sentiments, as the asylum from the perturbations of the world, as the pillow for her head, languishing with the sorrows and oppressions of mortality. The general sense of mankind has universally concurred in approving those generous spirits, that have distinguished themselves among their species by the ardour and fidelity of *friendship*. Let the union of *John* and *Jesus* be hereafter celebrated among those illustrious pairs, who have descended with such encomiums down the stream of time from the earliest antiquity to these late ages of the world. This pattern of pure *christian friendship**, (and much does it redound, I think, to the honour of our *evangelist* to have harmonized in congenial affections with such a spotless heart!) this pattern, I say, of true *christian friendship*, were lovely in *their lives*, and in *their deaths*, though divided in *body*, yet, in *spirit* and the continuity of love, they were still united through the medium of an object equally endeared to them both. *Jesus* seeing his mother†, and the disciple whom he loved, standing

* John xiii. 23.—xxi. 20.

† John xix. 26, 27.

by the cross, active as ever to beneficence and tenderness in the midst of torture! saith unto his mother: Woman! behold thy son. Then he saith to the disciple: Behold! thy mother. And from that very hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Such is the alliance between *true wisdom* and *unsophisticated nature*, that the *gospel* exhibits, but with additional incentives to attachment and perseverance, the same affections which actuated the bosom of virtue in the early days of primitive simplicity, or the later æra of philosophical refinement. For the proper office of philosophy consists in rectifying the deviations of the mind from its original rule of right, and in rekindling those sparks of *intellect* and *virtue*, which the oppressions of depraved habit, the smother of false knowledge, and the mists of artificial manners, have conspired to obscure. In this view, even the dispensation of the GOSPEL itself, which is stiled in *scripture* a RESTITUTION* of things—a *reconciliation*† of the *alienated affections* of *relatives* and *friends*—may be regarded in some respect (but in connection

* Acts iii. 21. Matthew xvii. 11.

† Luke i. 17. Malachi iv. 6.

*Nor think in nature's state they blindly trod,
The state of nature was the reign of God.*

POPE.

with

with an indubitable ascertainment of immortality by the obedience of *Christ* unto death) as a *republication* of the LAW of nature—as the mean of restoration to the primæval purity of patriarchal manners, exhibited in the early periods of the *Mosaic* history; the memory of which was preserved by tradition among all the posterity of *Adam*, and consigned to written records, as men emerged from barbarism, in the memorials of the *golden age*.

An excellent passage from *Themistius* shall close the observation of this *Section* *.

“ For these reasons I have enlarged on this
 “ topic. I suspect, that you are laughing at the
 “ philosophers, and think of them with disrespect,
 “ when ye see them fondly attached to their sons
 “ and daughters, like other men. I must tell you,
 “ therefore, that these very feelings are of the es-
 “ sence of philosophy ; and, as far as they ac-
 “ tuate the breasts of others, are derived from no
 “ other source, inasmuch as Nature hath im-
 “ planted in every man some elementary princi-
 “ ples of philosophy †.”

REMARK.

* Orat. xxxii.

† It forms one of the most amiable traits in the character of *Sir Isaac Newton*, who was indeed *all-accomplished* beyond

REMARK XIX.

I HOLD it to be an indisputable proposition, that the grand object of all the dispensations of God's providence towards the inhabitants of the earth, is their consummation in purity and virtue—the reillumination of the *dim* and *marred* visage of debased man to the brightness of his own celestial countenance, reflected in full lustre upon

yond any of his species, that he was fond of *little children*, and delighted to see them playing about his study. Such was the simplicity, the sweetness, the condescension of a mind, that could expatiate through the universe,

And pass the flaming bounds of place and time!

resembling in this respect also the affectionate tenderness of the *Nazarene*; who fondled *little children* in his arms, laid his hands upon them, and recommended their innocent and artless manners to the imitation of his disciples.—And yet (that I may lose no opportunity of shaming corrupted Churches, which *make* and *love* and *believe* a LIE (2 Thess. ii. 11. Revel. xx. 15.) and of disgracing *antichristian* principles, wherever I discover them) these very *infants* are strenuously maintained by *sound divines*, the spiritual pastors and teachers of this goodly land! to be CHILDREN OF WRATH and BORN IN SIN, 'till the hallowed drops from their *disinterested* fingers have purged away the defilements of nativity, and made the *creature* fit for the acceptance of its Creator!!!

the

the votaries of the gospel from the *face of Jesus Christ**. All that the Creator has required of his creatures in every period of time is a conformity to the dictates of their consciences, and an observance of the rules of rectitude commensurate to the respective portions of their knowledge. It is highly honourable to the *christian* system, as laid down both by *Jesus* and his *apostles*, that purity of heart and active virtue are set forth by them as the criterion of merit and the condition of divine acceptance. Kind affections and beneficent exertions are the *sacrifices*, with which God is pleased. Frivolous oblations, tedious ceremonies†, canting prayers, with all the trumpery of your *superstitious mummers* and *creed-mongers* of the *churches*, are excluded from the temple of gospel worship, whose foundation and superstructure are in the heart—whose pillars are *confidence*‡ in heaven—whose materials are *good-works*—whose *builder* and *contriver* is God him-

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. iii. 18.

† When our Saviour came into the world, the religion of the greatest part of it ran out into a multitude of little rites, weak observances, bodily postures; and he appoints a religion directly opposite; plain, simple, rational, life and spirit; whose main design was to employ and perfect the mind and spirit of a man. *Spencer on Prodigies*.

‡ πίστις—*faith*—*reliance* upon God.

■

self.

self. *He, that hath my commandments, saith OUR Lord, and keepeth them ; HE IT IS THAT LOVETH ME**. And his favourite apostle : *In this we know, that we have a knowledge of God, if we keep his commandments†*.

Now, according to my apprehension, as a contrary doctrine would have been highly derogatory to the *gospel*, it is not only no trivial recommendation of the *Christain* doctrines and the character of their preacher, to agree so harmoniously with the sentiments and positions of undepraved Reason, as she addresses these later ages through the mouths of the great and good, the venerable philosophers of *Greece* and *Rome* ; but constitutes moreover with me a satisfactory demonstration of the pure *antichristianism* of the present *establishments* of religion, and the modes, generally prevalent among us, of practising and inculcating the faith of *Jesus*. All is ostentation, ceremony, commutation, and filthy lucre ! Nay, the majority of modern professing *Christians* have been persuaded, that the *Father* of mankind, who *ran* to

* John xiv. 21.

† 1 Epist. ii. 3. and many other places. Compare also with respect to the reasoning of this article Rom. ii. 13—16. which is adverted to below.

meet his repentant son, when *a long way off**, could not possibly deliver from *perdition* the children, who so strikingly resembled his own perfections; such as *Socrates, Plato*, and all the luminaries of *Gentile* virtue. But, what is still more worthy of admiration! our own *Church*† has the *audacity* (the *impiety* I should

* Luke xv. 20. We have been lately furnished with another decisive proof of the correspondence of our ecclesiastical establishment and the spirit of our rulers with the meekness and gentleness of *Christianity*. The *King's proclamation* calls upon us to confess our sins and implore the protection of the *Almighty*, when we are fitting out *fleets* and *armies* for the murder of his creatures; as if the shedding of human blood in company with a confederacy of royal butchers characterised the disciples of THE PRINCE OF PEACE. What are common blasphemies and ordinary murders in competition with such transcendant enormities as this?

When we consider the conduct of *Great-Britain* in the *East* and *West-Indies*, in the *Slave-Trade*, and in the laws at home, so peculiarly adapted to corrupt and debase the manners of the people; and all this under a pretension of reformed religion, and a happy constitution;—certainly the national guilt of no great empire since the creation of the world, if knowledge and opportunity be taken into the account, was at all comparable to our own. Yet we can talk of *French* profligacy and *French* atheism! as if corrupt *Christianity* had not much to reform before it arrives at that limit of neutrality, where we place the *French*.

† In the *thirteenth* Article of Religion.

have said) to require all her sons to depose before God on oath, in the very teeth of our *Saviour** and *St. Paul*, that the GOOD WORKS of heathens are *not* PLEASANT TO GOD, *but have the NATURE OF SIN!*—When will the mind of man throw off this debasing bondage? When will his dormant powers start from their trance of stupefaction, and level this *hay and stubble*—this vile rubbish of ignorance and supineness, of craft and peculation—with the ground?

Happy for us *dissentients*, that we can sustain ourselves, in the interval of a patient waiting for the will of God 'till his due season, with the consolatory oracles of divine wisdom; and are able to confront with this cœlestial armour the unblushing dogmas of artifice and folly: conscious as we are, that *virtuous sin*, blind to the excellence of these *establishments*, is more precious in the sight of God, than all the *illuminated knavery* of *gospel-churches*. How far the good sense of antiquity gives us countenance, independant of the express testimonies of the *evangelists*, the following extract will sufficiently evince; which appears

* *And I say unto you, Many shall come from the east and west, and will sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*

to me remarkably pertinent to the subject before us*.

“ *Diogenes* may be properly employed against
 “ *Sophocles* also ; who hath stricken many myriads
 “ of men with despondency by the following verses
 “ concerning the mysteries :

“ *Thrice happy they go down into the grave,*
 “ *Whose eyes have witnessed this sacred sight !*
 “ *For these alone in that dread region live :*
 “ *The rest immerge in darkness all, and woe.*

“ Now *Diogenes*, upon hearing something in
 “ this strain : What say you ? says he. Will *Pa-*
 “ *tæcian* the thief fare better, when he dies, for
 “ having been initiated, than *Epaminondas* ?”

Let me be permitted to recommend also a most
 admirable passage of an early *Christian father* to
 the consideration of bigots and fanatics of every
 denomination†; and to entreat from them, as an
 edifying

* *Plutarch. de audiendis poetis*, ii. 21. edit. Xylandri.

† *Irenæus*, adv. hæc. iv. 39. edit *Grabe*. *Non enim propter eos solos, qui temporibus Tiberii Cæsaris crediderunt ei, venit CHRISTUS; nec propter eos solos, qui nunc sunt, homines, providentiam fecit Pater; sed propter omnes omninò homines, qui ab initio secundum virtutem suam in suâ generatione et timuerunt et dilexerunt Deum, et justè et piè conversati sunt erga proximos,*

edifying exercise of their private meditations, the comparison of *his* sentiments with those of the compilers of our *articles* and the leading *rabbies* of the *Church of England*.

“ For not merely on account of those, who
 “ believed on him in the times of Tiberius Cæsar,
 “ did Christ appear; nor did God ordain his pro-
 “ vidence for those only, who are now alive; but
 “ for all men without distinction, who from the
 “ beginning have feared and loved God accord-
 “ ing to their ability in their generation; and
 “ have conducted themselves righteously and af-
 “ fectionately towards their neighbours, and have
 “ desired to see *Christ*, and to hear his voice.
 “ Wherefore, all of this description will be first
 “ raised from sleep at his second coming, and he
 “ will restore to life as well those as the rest, who
 “ are to be judged; and will settle them in his
 “ kingdom. Inasmuch as it is the *same God*, who

imos, et concupierunt videre Christum, et audire vocem ejus. Quapropter omnes hujusmodi in secundo adventu primò de somno excitabit, et eriget tam eos, quàm reliquos qui judicabuntur; et constituet in regnum suum. Quoniam quidè unum Deus, (Rom. iii. 30.) qui patriarchas quidè direxit in dispositiones suas; justificavit autè circumcisionem ex fide et præputium per fidem. Quemadmodum enim in primis nos præfigurabamur et prænuntiabamur; sic rursus in nobis illi deformantur, hoc est, in ecclesia; et recipiunt mercedem pro his quæ laboraverunt.

“ directed

“ directed indeed the patriarchs into his dispen-
“ sations, and *justified circumcision upon faith, and*
“ *uncircumcision by faith.* For as we were pre-
“ figured and foretold in the ancients, so they, on
“ the other hand, are completely formed in us,
“ that is in the church; and receive a reward for
“ their labours*.”

REMARK XX.

No trait more conspicuous in the features of our *Saviour's* character or more consonant to the previous ideas of dispassionate philosophy concerning a teacher commissioned by the gracious *parent* of the universe, than the *benevolent* tendency of the *gospel miracles*. It was, we are told by the historians, the *meat and drink* of *Jesus* to *go about doing good*, in imitation of that God, *whose tender mercies are over all his works*.

The alleviation of human misery in all it's forms, unconnected with every symptom of interest, vanity, and ambition, was the invariable end, to

* The author seems to consider the *Christian church* as a *collective body*, consummated by the joint operation of all it's members, in whatever period of time this operation may have been exerted.

which all his supernatural endowments appear to have been directed*. He refused to exhibit signs from heaven, or call down fire on the Samaritans, or pray for twelve legions of angels, to create mere astonishment and admiration, and to subserve an intemperate ambition. The few and slight objections, which the busy ingenuity of unbelievers has been able to raise in opposition to the present

* *Nusquàm legimus miraculum aliquod à Christo patratum circa honores, aut pecunias; sed tantùm circa corpus humanum, aut conservandum, aut sustendandum, aut personandum,* Bacon de Augm. Scient. L. iv. C. 2. In the English, vol. i. p. 68. edition of 1778, and the reason may be assigned in the words of *Alexander the Aristotelian*, apud *Cyrl. contra Julianum*. lib. iv. p. 132. Ἰδοὺ γὰρ παντὸς ἀγαθὸς τοῦ ὀφειδέν. for it is the peculiar property of every good being to confer benefits.

The recognitions of *Clement*, lib. iii. sect. 59, 60. furnish some good observations on this topic in favour of the gospel miracles. *Ille, qui à malo est, &c.* “He, that is from the
“evil one, shews signs of no profit to any man; but the
“actions of a good messenger are servicable to all. For
“tell me, I pray, what is the use of making statues walk;
“dogs, of brass or marble, bark; mountains dance, and
“fly through the air, which ye say *Simon Magus* did? But
“what proceeds from a good man has respect to the wel-
“fare of mankind: like the actions of our Lord; who
“made the blind to see, the deaf to hear; set on their
“legs the weak and lame; drove away sicknesses and
“dæmons; raised up the dead.”

Remark,

Remark, is of itself a noble testimony to this ingredient in the composition of our Saviour's character. The destruction of the *herd of swine* may be justly regarded, perhaps, as a *proper punishment* of their owners for keeping such animals in direct violation of the *Mosaic* institutes; and as a suitable interference in the anointed servant of the *Jehovah* of the *Hebrews*, who *came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil**.—

And even infidelity herself might blush at her noisy cavils upon the blasting of a BARREN fig-tree by the WAY-SIDE; neither an invasion of private property, nor any injury to the community at large. But the *lesson*, which this emblematic action dictated with peculiar efficacy and impression to our Lord's disciples, and now dictates to ourselves, is of the first importance to every man alive;—to the *deist*, as well as the *believer in revelation*. If the opportunities, which

* *Cybil* (lib. vi.) has preserved a curious attestation of the Emperor *Julian* to the *Christian miracles*, which will not be unacceptable to the *English* reader,

“ But Jesus, having persuaded a few of the vilest of
 “ your rabble, has had no fame beyond three hundred
 “ years: nor did he perform during his life any work
 “ worth hearing, unless a man fancies the HEALING OF
 “ MAIMED AND BLIND MEN, and the exorcising of *dæmons*
 “ in the villages *Bethsaida* and *Bethany* to be MIGHTY
 “ PERFORMANCES,”

God.

God has given us for the purification of our affections and the improvement of our virtue, be neglected or misemployed;—if we be found *unfruitful* in good works, and inattentive to the promotion of human happiness in proportion to our ability; we must expect to be *withered*, like the *barren fig-tree*, before the fiery breath of his displeasure, when he cometh to judge the earth*.

REMARK XXI.

THE manner of our Lord's defence, when arraigned at the tribunal of the *high-priest*, immediately before his crucifixion, is highly consonant

* Μη γινωιτο γαρ ινα εν ημιν γνηται κατα την ακαρπον εκεινη συκη, μη ποτε ελθων ο Ιησους και νυν καταρασθαι δια την ακαρπια. Cyril. Hieros. catech. i. 4. *May that of the barren fig-tree not befall us! lest Jesus, coming at any time, should curse now also on account of unfruitfulness.*

Christ whips OUR FRUITLESSNESS in the innocent fig-tree; like as the manner was among the Persians, when their great men had offended, to take their garments and beat them. JOHN HALES, ii. 51.

To the same purpose also CRAIG in his *essay on the life of Jesus Christ*, p. 48.

Omnis enim, quicumque Deo nil fertile nutrit,
Ceus sterilis truncus, lignis æquabitur ustis.

Sedulius.

to the general excellence of his character; a noble combination of wisdom and intrepidity, strongly declarative of conscious innocence and of high desert.

The high-priest askt Jesus concerning his disciples and his doctrine.

Jesus answered: I spake freely to the world: I have constantly taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where the Jews resort from all quarters, and in secret have I spoken nothing. Why dost thou ask me? ask my hearers what I spake unto them. Behold! they know what I said.*

It cannot indeed be affirmed with justice that such an apology is a *proof* of innocence and virtue; but we may reasonably maintain, that no innocent and virtuous person could have adopted an apology more conformable to such a character. The evidence, therefore, in favour of our Lord, is the rational evidence in the eye of philosophy, resulting naturally from the circumstances of the case.

The demeanour of *Socrates* in a similar situation, as delivered to us by his great admirer and worthy disciple, *Xenophon*†, is most happily parallel to that of *Jesus*.

* John xviii. 19—22.

† Apol. Soc. i. 2, 3. And in Mem. iv. 8. 4. the same account is delivered somewhat more at large.

“ *Hermogenes*, observing *Socrates* to discourse
 “ about every thing rather than his trial, said to
 “ him: But, *Socrates*, was it not proper for you
 “ to consider also what apology you shall make?
 “ To which he answered first: Do not I appear
 “ to you to make my apology by an attention to
 “ the whole conduct of my life? How? said *Her-*
 “ *mogenes*. By passing through life, replied he,
 “ without a single action of injustice: which I
 “ regard as the best consideration of an apology.”

There is also a striking resemblance in another circumstance, mentioned by *Xenophon** concerning *Socrates*, to the account just quoted from the *evangelist*.

“ I wonder at this accusation, which *Melitus*
 “ brings against me: for at least, when I sacrificed
 “ on the common festivals and the public altars,
 “ both the rest, that were present, used to see me,
 “ and *Melitus* himself, if he had chosen it.”

• It gives me pleasure to illustrate and honour, as far as I am able, the virtues of the great *Athenian*, whilst I endeavour to set forth in the proper point of view the character of *Christ*. The *reason* or *word* of God, that unchangeable and universal energy of heaven, which *spoke by various portions and in various manners in the days of old to the Jewish fathers by the prophets, and in the last days by his*

* Mem. i. 1—10.

beloved son*, spake also, in it's proportion, to the men of *Athens* by the mouth of *Socrates*; who may be justly deemed *a light, shining in a dark place, 'till the day should dawn, and the morning-star arise in the hearts† of the Gentiles.*

REMARK XXII.

JESUS CHRIST is introduced, in several passages of his history, recommending *his own example* as a proper model for the imitation of his disciples. Such self-commendation *may* be, no doubt, the symptom of a weak and ignoble mind; and is in fact not unfrequently found in more immediate connection with incapacity and meanness: but, accompanied by *certain circumstances* and employed for *certain ends*, it is merely the genuine ebullition of a soul overflowing with great and generous sentiments.

“*Achilles*,” says *Eustathius‡*, “in thus speaking of himself, and stiling himself the best of the *Greeks*, is influenced by a sense of honour and of high desert. Now it is plain, that *self-applause* is not always censurable as it was in

* Heb. i. 1.

† 2 Pet. i. 19.

‡ In Il. p. 71. lib. A. upon what *Achilles* replies to *Agamemnon*.

“the case of *Astydamus*, celebrated in the proverb*; but, on some occasions, a symptom of a high sense of honour and magnanimity; as appears from the case of *Ajax* in *Sophocles*, and the *Philoctetes* and *Hercules* of the same Poet, and ten thousand other instances.”

A celebrated moralist of antiquity† has considered in a distinct essay, in what circumstances a man, without an imputation of impropriety, may be allowed to *commend himself*. It will be worthwhile to make an application of some of the philosopher’s remarks to the conduct of our Saviour.

A consciousness of superiour merit, attended by an actual manifestation of this merit, is allowed to be one privilege for *Self-Commendation*. And surely the claim, which the moralist puts in for *Pindar*, on account of the excellences of his poetry, the christian may very pardonably advance in behalf of the multifarious and transcendant virtues of *Jesus Christ*.

Our moralist grants also, that a *political* character, with no insidious design of vanity and popular applause, but with an honest intention of inciting others to an emulation of his exploits,

* The proverb here alluded to is this:

Σαυτην επαινει, ὡςπερ Αστυδαμας ποτι*

which see in *Suidas* with the incidents, that gave it birth.

† *Plutarch*, in his *morals*.

may

may be indulged in proclaiming his own praises. Could this candid judge have disapproved, shall we suppose, the modest exhortation of our Saviour; or rather would he not pronounce it to be the undoubted effusion of a conscious magnanimity? *Learn of ME*; says this unaffected votary of true wisdom: *learn of me; for I am MEEK and LOWLY IN HEART: and ye shall find rest unto your souls**.

No suspicion surely of conceit and pride will easily suggest itself to the reader, when *humility* and *meekness* are the highest merit, which is claimed: a species of merit, for which many would not feel the smallest inclination to dispute; and which a *Greek* or *Roman* hero, and a modern bravo, would even think a degradation to the dignity of a manly character.

Self-Commendation is allowed also to be even *necessary*, when we are called upon to apologize for our conduct, and to repel the attack of an accuser†. Such occasions were often presented to

* Matt. xi. 29.

† *Plutarch in Themistocle*: Ἡδὴ δὲ καὶ τῶν πολιτῶν διὰ τὸ φόβου ἡδὲ τὰς διαβολὰς προσεμεινῶν, ἡγαγκαζέτο λυπηρὸν εἶναι, τὰν αὐτῶν πράξεων ἐν τῷ δήμῳ πολλαχὲς μνημονευομένων. See also *Demosthenes de coroná*: p. 132. ed. Lutet. and the following admirable, but indirect, vindication of himself by *Epaminondas*, one of the very greatest characters of antiquity, is related also by *Cornelius Nepos*, sect. 8.—The reply, which *Scipio* gave to a tacit charge of peculation, is well known. “*It was on this day, said he, that I CONQUERED HANNIBAL.*”

OUR

our Lord by the malice of his enemies. With good reason might he say: *Which of you convinceth me of sin*?* *Many good works have I shewed you from my father: for which of those works do ye stone me†?*—“Such encomiums of himself,” to adopt the words of my instructive author, “not only keep clear of arrogance and self-sufficiency, but betoken an *elevated spirit* and an *exalted virtue*, that will not suffer itself to be trampled on by the foot of envy.” And to this observation he subjoins a little piece of history very pertinent to our present subject; and which, whilst it cannot fail both to entertain and instruct the reader, may serve to invalidate that plausible objection of the *Pharisees*: *Thou bearest record of thyself: thy record is not true‡.*

“When the *Thebans* accused their General *Pelopidas* for making an irruption into the territories of the *Spartans*, and for restoring the ruined condition of *Messene*, after the expiration of his office; his abject submission and entreaties with difficulty procured his acquittal. *Epaminondas*, on the other hand, who had been his colleague in this expedition, pronounced before his Judges a magnificent panegyric of their mutual exploits, and profest himself ready to suffer death, if they would declare aloud the reasons of their condemnation; which would

* John viii. 46. † John x. 32. ‡ John viii. 13.

“ have

“ have been neither more nor less than an enu-
 “ meration of the great services performed for
 “ their country. The whole audience was stricken
 “ with admiration of his magnanimity, and in-
 “ stantly acquitted him.” I will subjoin to this
remark another quotation from *Xenophon's Apology*
 for *Socrates*, sect. 5.

“ Can you think it strange, said *Socrates*, if even
 “ God judges it better for me to die now? Dost
 “ thou not know, that to this very time I have
 “ yielded to no man in virtue of deportment? I
 “ am conscious of the most pleasing source of
 “ satisfaction, in having passed through a life of
 “ holiness and justice: so that, whilst I felt a
 “ strong approbation of myself, I found my
 “ friends also bear the same attestation to my
 “ virtues*.”

I cannot conclude this topic more properly
 than with some exquisite observations of *De-*
mosthenes, strongly corroborative of all that has
 been alledged under the present *article*†.

* In my humble opinion, this ingenuous frankness is
 infinitely more laudable than the whining piety of *John*
Wesley and such men; who, at the same time that they
 think highly of themselves (and justly too) and wish all
 mankind to think highly of them, speak of themselves,
 with a stupid and false humility, as the vilest of all
 sinners.

† Περὶ συρτάξεως, p. 100, ad imum. Ταῦτα δ' ἐμὲν—κτλ.—

“ Now these things it has been your fate to ex-
 “ cute not from any natural inferiority to your an-
 “ cestors, but because they conceived nobly of
 “ themselves, and ye, O *Athenians*! have lost
 “ these sentiments. Now, in my opinion, it is
 “ not possible, that men, whose actions are tri-
 “ vial and mean, should be ever actuated by
 “ great and spirited ideas; nor, on the other
 “ hand, that THE AUTHORS OF ILLUSTRIOUS
 “ AND HONOURABLE EXPLOITS SHOULD IM-
 “ BIBE MEAN AND GROV’LING SENTIMENTS:
 “ for correspondent to their pursuits, of neces-
 “ sity will the conceptions of all men be.”

REMARK XXIII.

AN extraordinary penetration of intellect, and a deep insight into the recesses of the human heart, were never more decisively demonstrated than by the following observations, both of the same tendency.

Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them; and then shall they fast.*

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now†.

* Matt. ix. 15.

† John xvi. 12.

The sudden transitions, here disapproved, are neither authorised as prudent by the decisions of experience, nor adapted in themselves to the production of beneficial and permanent effects. The instantaneous transformation of *Demea* in the comedy from a *parsimonious churl* to a *gay and liberal and affable old-fellow*, I could never esteem but as a most unnatural representation of life and manners*. A much truer picture of humanity is presented to us in the character of *Hazael* by the unaffected penman of the *Jewish history*. Whilst the prophet was enumerating to the *Syrian messenger* some shocking instances of his future cruelty, his heart revolted with horror from the very idea of such enormities; and compelled him to exclaim: *But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing†?* An access to the height either of vice or virtue must be gradually progressive, and was never yet accomplished by a single step‡. *The path of the just,*

* Agreeably to the just precept of *Aristotle*: poet. cap. xxviii. Κάν γὰρ ἀνωμαλὸς τις ἢ, ὁμῶς ὁμαλὸς ἀνωμαλὸν δεῖ εἶναι.

† 2 Kings, viii. 13.

‡ Ἐστὶ τις λογὸς τὰν Ἀρεῖαν ναιεῖν

Δυσσεμβάλοι; ἐπὶ πείραις.—κλ. Simonides.

Nemo repente fuit turpissimus. Juvenal.

No man e'er reacht the heights of vice at once.

just, says Solomon, is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Pursuant to the intrinsic wisdom of these maxims, founded on the immoveable basis of experience and philosophy, our Lord connived at many prejudices of his disciples, and treated their infirmities of mind, and prepossessions of education, with invariable indulgence. He removed every obstruction to their improvement with a gentle and patient hand; by converting even the most minute and incidental occurrences into so many useful lessons of morality; and by introducing, with assiduous attention and reiterated efforts, the grand truths of his religion into their minds, by the most artful indirect address, and every effort of winning insinuation. He knew the dangerous warfare, in which they were going to be engaged; he knew, that nothing but lenient discipline, and an easy transition from truth to truth, trial to trial, in orderly succession, could enable them to withstand effectually the rough encounter of that *evil*

See to this purpose some excellent observations in *Spencer de Leg. Heb.* 111. 2. a book, which, as a rational useful and learned publication, has seen, in my opinion, no superior since the revival of learning in *Europe*. *Lord Barrington*, in his *fourth* essay of the *second* volume of his *Miscellanea Sacra*, pays our learned divine a very handsome and deserved compliment.

day

day which was approaching. And this method of procedure, though abundantly recommended by it's own independent wisdom, received a full confirmation of it's propriety in the event itself. These simple *Galileans*, so rude and timid and inexperienced at first, gave full proof of the excellence of that preceptor, at whose feet they had been lectured, and by whose example they had been trained up, in a fortitude and perseverance unsubdued by sufferings, and undismayed by death.

Such consummate prudence, such reach of foresight, we see, was contained in that reply of our blessed Saviour to the question of *John's* disciples: *Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not* *? In corroboration of these speculations, I shall stay to produce some authorities on so important a topic, equally just and entertaining.

“ We can never do more injury to truth, than
 “ by discovering too much of it on some occasions. 'Tis the same with understandings as
 “ with eyes: to such a certain size and make just
 “ so much light is necessary, and no more. What-
 “ ever is beyond, brings confusion †.

Fuller, in his usually quaint but sensible manner, thus expresses himself on this point †.

* Matt. ix. 14.

* Shaftsbury's Charact. i. Treatise ii. Sect. 2.

† Church History, v. 3. 31.

“ Some zealots of our age will condemn the
 “ *Laodicean* temper (alluding to Rev. iii. 16.) of
 “ the *protestant bishops*, because—they might have
 “ set forth a more pure and perfect religion.
 “ Such men see the *faults* of reformers, but not
 “ the *difficulties* of *reformation*.—The generality
 “ of the people, being misled in ignorance and
 “ superstition, could not on a sudden endure the
 “ extremity of an absolute reformation. Should
 “ our eyes be instantly posted out of midnight
 “ into noon-day, certainly we should be blinded
 “ with the suddenness and excellency of the
 “ lustre thereof. Nature, therefore, hath wisely
 “ provided the twilight as a bridge, by degrees to
 “ pass us from darkness to light. Yea, our Sa-
 “ viour himself did at the first connive at the
 “ carnality of his *apostles*, and would not *put new*
 “ *wine into old bottles*, for fear of breaking. Yea,
 “ he had some commandments, which as yet they
 “ were *not able to bear*.—Thus the best of artists
 “ do not always work to the height of their own
 “ skill, but according to the capacity of the sub-
 “ ject, whereon they employ themselves*.”

* The reader, who is so disposed, may see some further
 remarks to the same purport in p. 27. of *my address to the*
clergy, prefixed to *my enquiry into the opinions of the early*
Christian writers concerning the person of Christ : and at p. 11.
 of *my treatise on public worship*, 3d edition.

REMARK

REMARK XXIV.

THE answer, returned by our Lord to the messengers of *John*, is not observable merely for the extreme delicacy of the reproof, which it conveys, but indicates a dignity of character correspondent to our previous conceptions of a divine teacher of religion *.

John the *Baptist*, like our Lord's own disciples, and the rest of the *Jews* without exception, appears to have entertained a most mistaken notion concerning the nature of the *Messiah's* kingdom; presuming that he intended to erect a *temporal monarchy* at *Jerusalem*, to deliver the country of *Judea* from the *Roman* yoke, and extend his victorious empire to the extremities of the earth. This messenger of the expected prophet had been

* I follow in this *remark* my own interpretation of *John's* message to *Jesus*, proposed some years ago in my *Commentary* on *St. Matthew*, which I believe in many respects to be entirely new, and which certainly sets this whole transaction, the fruitful parent of much criticism and debate, in a very plain, advantageous, and becoming light. A late author, however, has published a *volume* upon this subject, and delivers the same interpretation as *his own*. I think myself much indebted to the candour of the *Analytical Reviewers* for their intention of doing me justice on this occasion. Matt. xi. 2—7.

now confined in prison for some time by the command of *Herod*, where the reputation of our Saviour's mighty works had reached him, and excited no little astonishment, that such a personage, exhibiting such undeniable testimonials of a heavenly commission, should suffer his forerunner to languish and die in captivity without redress. Full of these erroneous ideas, he sends two of his disciples to *Jesus*, with a message declaratory of his entire persuasion, that he was the *Christ* promised by the prophecies to their fathers ; and that every expectation on this head was accomplished in his person. *Thou art he who was to come: Can we expect another*?*

Our Lord dived immediately into the whole tendency of this message, and gave a reply, than which, I think, nothing more beautiful and striking can easily be conceived.

He began with healing in the presence of *John's* messengers a variety of diseased people, who had been brought to him for that purpose ; and *to many that were blind he gave sight* †. A sufficient proof this! of the benevolent and salutary nature of his commission ;—that he was not come, like the *military murderers* of ancient and modern times, to *destroy* men's lives, but to *save* them. *Go*, says

* Matt. xi. 3.

* Luke vii. 21.

this champion of love and truth; go, and shew John again those things, which ye hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

The latter parts of this answer are worthy of particular attention: *The poor have the gospel preached to them.* “The lower orders of mankind, who are treated with such indignity and contempt, as the refuse of the earth—the profane vulgar*—the cursed people†—are the more immediate

* Hor. Od. iii. 1. 1.

† See John vii. 49.

Denominated with no less emphasis of late by the right honourable EDMUND BURKE, *the swinish multitude*, in language as opposite to that of our Saviour, as the tempers of the Nazarene and Briton, as gentleness to rage, as sobriety to fanaticism, as tenderness to insult, as condescension to contempt, as benevolence to malignity.

There is extant a divine passage on this subject in a copious extract from a work of Diotogenes, the Pythagorean, preserved by Stobæus, which I will present to my reader.

“But we ought to carry ourselves without an overbearing insolence to all men, but ESPECIALLY to our INFERIORS in happiness and station. For they, like the sick, can endure nothing grievous. And, in observing this conduct, we shall imitate the dispositions of the gods, and especially

“ immediate objects of *my* regard and favour. *I*
 “ am not come to debase mankind—to trample
 “ on the rights and happiness of the human race—
 “ to encrease their miseries and strengthen their
 “ oppressors—but to relieve and comfort, to illu-
 “ minate and purify, to vindicate and exalt, these
 “ degraded children of a common father—these
 “ lowly sons of poverty, distress, and ignomi-
 “ ny; whom I am *not ashamed to call my bre-*
 “ *thren**.”

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in
me. “ Happy is the man, who shall be convinced
 “ of his erroneous preconceptions of the *Messiah's*
 “ character, nor feel himself scandalized at the

“ especially of the supreme ruler, *Jupiter* : for he, though
 “ so venerable for pre-eminent rank and superlative vir-
 “ tue, yet is kind, and beneficent, and a giver of good
 “ things; so as to be truly, as he is stiled by the *Ionian*
 “ poet,

“ *The genuine father both of men and gods.*”

Sedulius says very beautifully, pasch. hym. ii.

——— viros ex piscatoribus aptos
 Discipulos jubet esse suos; talesque supernæ
 Conciliat vitæ, quos non ventosa loquendi
 Gloria, nec vanâ de nobilitate superbus
 Sanguis alat, sed fama tacens humilique refulgens
 Mente nitor coelo faciat de plebe propinquos.

* Heb. ii. 12.

“ lowliness

“ lowliness of my office, and the insignificance of
 “ my outward station.”

This idea of the whole transaction furnishes also a most obvious, and, in my judgement, most satisfactory interpretation too of that extraordinary assertion of our Lord to his disciples, after *John's* messengers had left him.

Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist : notwithstanding he, that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he.

As if he had said: “ Great as my forerunner
 “ *John* may be, and how eminent soever his rank
 “ among the *Jewish* teachers ; I assure you, that
 “ the *least* disciple of my *heavenly* kingdom, which
 “ he fancies intended to resemble the kingdoms of
 “ *this world*—the very meanest among you all, who
 “ entertains just sentiments of my designation and
 “ the genius of that gospel, which I am preach-
 “ ing, is *greater than he**.”

* I have since found the same interpretation in *Lightfoot's Horæ Hebraicæ* on this passage ; and, as I read this author at an early period of my *theological* pursuits, and had been out of the way of consulting him for many years, so as to lose all recollection of any specific criticisms proposed by him ; it is by no means improbable, that I originally watered my understanding from that spring, and afterwards, out of mere forgetfulness of the fountain-head, distributed this rivulet among the public as my own.

I wish

I wish the reader to observe, that our conclusions are not formed upon the strength of *one* or *two* deductions; but, we think that so *many* repeated proofs of *superiour wisdom* and *dignity of mind*, in all varieties of circumstance, in *one* character, compose a force of argument, which no stubbornness of incredulity can reasonably resist; and which might extort from *infidelity* as well as *heathenism*, the exclamation of the *Roman* soldier: TRULY THIS MAN WAS A SON OF GOD.

REMARK XXV.

AN incidental attestation in favour of our Lord, in *St. Matthew's Gospel**, is too pertinent to be passed by unnoticed.

And, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at his doctrines, for he taught them as one having authority: and not as the Scribes †.

What was the mode of teaching adopted by the *Scribes*, we may collect from various passages in the *New Testament*.

* C. vii. v. 28, 29. So Mark i. 22. Luke iv. 32, to the same effect.

† Under this term the *Lawyers*, *Pharisees*, and *Sadducees* also, who composed the tribe of *Jewish* doctors and instructors, I suppose to be included.

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One affection, by which they were actuated in their addresses to the people, was FEAR. They declined, for instance, to give one answer to our Saviour's question, *because they FEARED the multitude**.

Another motive, which influenced the doctrines of these people, was WORLDLY INTEREST. This appears from the charge of *rapacity* and *extortion* brought against them by our Lord†; a charge, which the state of manners among the *Jews*, as delivered down by other authors and their own countryman *Josephus*, will not allow us to consider as malicious and unfounded.

To these motives we may add, an inordinate CONCEIT of their own attainments, and an excessive VAIN-GLORY, and desire of popularity, which led them even to counterfeit *miraculous* performances without the ability of atchieving *one*:—all which particulars are ascertained by the *evangelical* historians‡, and other authorities beyond exception.

It is easy to suppose what impediments these unworthy motives must have thrown in the way of such preceptors in their addresses to the people; and that the corruption of their manners, exem-

* Matt. xxi. 26. Luke xx. 6.

† Matt. xxiii. 14—25.

‡ Matt. xxiii. 5—8. John vii. 49. Matt. xii. 27.

plified,

plified, no doubt, in a variety of other follies and enormities, must have incapacitated them for much moral service as teachers of religion. No heart so depraved, but admires in others that *virtue*, which itself has lost: no understanding so slender, but is able to advance the forcible apostrophe of the men of *Nazareth: Physician, heal thyself**.

Without much difficulty, therefore, may we draw our inferences from these topics in favour of our Lord. If the authority, with which he delivered his doctrines, made such an impression on the minds of his hearers, it must have arisen from those causes, which alone are capable of securing such authority to the teachers of wisdom and morality; namely, TRUTH and INNOCENCE—*veracity of pretension, and integrity of life.*

Had an ignominious *fear* of popular insult and indignation;—had any *mercenary* views of temporal interest or advancement;—had a *servile adulation*, or an arrogant *pretension* to powers not possessed,—predominated in the mind of *Jesus*, or swayed his conduct;—had his deportment in private life been degraded by vices of any kind, or his general demeanour destitute of respect;—it would have been impossible, that our Lord should have so suspended the attention, commanded the

* Luke iv. 23.

reverence,

reverence, and excited the admiration of such large bodies of the people at various times and on various occasions. Nor was the current of popular approbation ever turned against him, but by the insidious misrepresentations and clandestine management of depraved *priests* and interested *rulers*, or by their own absurd mistaken expectations concerning the nature of his character, when the vexation of disappointment converted the veneration of their capricious minds into sentiments of revenge and cruelty.

REMARK XXVI.

BUT, perhaps, a more unequivocal proof of pure intention and undisguised simplicity of heart in the *gospel historians*, and consequently of the *veracity* of their histories, is in no one circumstance more conspicuously displayed, than in the accounts which *three* of them have given of our Lord's *agony* at *Gethsemane*. It is not conceivable, that men of sinister purpose would represent their hero in such a state of extreme dejection, solicitude, and horror, at the prospect of approaching death; especially at an æra, when a contempt of life and a readiness to sacrifice it even by suicide, particularly to escape the ignominy of a public

lic

lic exhibition as a criminal, however honourable it might be thought, was esteemed less honourable, than cowardice on such occasions was stigmatised as base and servile in the extreme. A relation, therefore, so little conformable to popular opinion, and so little likely to attract applause, must loudly proclaim its own authenticity to every dispassionate examiner; and the circumstances themselves, upon a closer consideration, will be found perfectly suitable to that *humanity* of constitution, that participation of all the native affections and propensities of man, which is spoken of as essential ingredients in consummating the character of the Saviour of mankind.

But the question is; “What could be the cause
“ of our Lord’s extreme distress? And what was
“ the cup, which he besought his *Father* to re-
“ move from him?”—This proposition appears to me a point of much importance, and of no little difficulty: and has exercised my thoughts very often for a many years; nor have I been able, till of late, to give myself entire satisfaction on the subject. I once thought it to be *death itself*, that *Jesus* was desirous of escaping. But *death* in the cause of truth he seems to have expected from the first throughout, as an essential article of his mission: and the writer to the *Hebrews**,

* C. v. V. 7.

who expressly tells us, that his prayer was HEARD, is irreconcilable to that *hypothesis*. I am now convinced, that not *death itself*, but the *TORMENTING death* of the cross, was the circumstance, which appeared so formidable to his imagination, and overwhelmed him with extremity of anguish.—Let us turn a more accurate attention to this affecting subject; which, in my *opinion*, throws a flood of lustre on the character of *Jesus*, and places the veracity of the *evangelists* in such a luminous point of view, as will establish with abundant conviction the votaries of our religion and perplex her adversaries.

There occurs a most beautiful passage in *St. Mark*, strongly distinguished by features apparently taken off from *ocular* observation; and which, I think, no power of artifice could possibly have reached.

*And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus continued GOING BEFORE THEM, and they were amazed, and followed him with fear. And he took aside the twelve again, and began to tell them what was going to befall him. “ Behold! we are
 “ going up to Jerusalem: and the son of man will
 “ be delivered up to the chief-priests and scribes,
 “ and they will condemn him to death, and deliver
 “ him up to the Gentiles, who will mock him,*
 “ and

“ and scourge him, and spit upon him, and kill him.”*

What a picture have we here of a mind haunted with a perpetual horror of approaching pain; and yet, with an impatience, arising from occasional fits of resolution so natural in such cases, eager to proceed, and anxious for a speedy termination of it's sufferings! There cannot be produced, in my opinion, from any author, a more pathetic incident, or more exactly consonant to the documents of experience and the dictates of philosophy. *“ Some, says Pliny†, were lamenting their own infelicity; others, that of their friends; some WERE IMPLORING DEATH FROM THE MERE TERROR OF IT.”* So true is that assertion of our incomparable child of nature:

————— present fears
Are less than HORRIBLE IMAGININGS.

And *Cæsar* has observed, that *“ we shall more easily find those, who are ready to suffer death,*

* C. x. V. 32—35.

† Epist. vi. 20. 14. Hi suum casum, illi suorum miserebantur: erant qui METU MORTIS MORTEM PRECARENTUR. See also *Dion Cassius*, frag. cxxxvi. 4. p. 57. vol. i. edit. Reimari.

“ than

“than those, who can endure uneasiness and
“pain*.”

We may discover also another proof of the perpetual presentation of the approaching catastrophe to his thoughts, and of the magnitude, to which his affrighted imagination had enlarged the terrific spectre.

Ye know not what ye are asking; he replies to the sons of Zebedee. Can ye drink the cup, which I am about to drink; and be baptised with the baptism, that I am going to be baptised with†?

And again: *I have a baptism to be baptized with: and HOW AM I STRAITENED, until it be accomplished‡?*

By the *cup*, therefore, I understand that *particular excruciating death*, the death of the cross§; and the assistance, which he received, represented in *St. Luke* by the appearance of *an angel from heaven strengthening him*,—I judge to be a recollection of his spirits, an infusion of fortitude, which determined him to a resolute submission to

* De Bell. Gall. vii. 77. Qui se ultrò morti obferant, faciliùs reperiuntur, quàm qui dolorem patientèr ferunt.

† Matt. xx. 22.

‡ Luke xii. 50.

§ Mentioned with such emphasis Heb. xii. 2. Phil. ii. 8. and elsewhere, as peculiarly formidable.

his fate; a determination not a little forwarded by the *nearness* of the event. When his fears had been exhausted in the previous agonizing conflict between duty and apprehension, between the infirmities of the *flesh* and the willingness of the *spirit* to accomplish the will of God;—when his bodily vigour was impaired by the struggle, and now relaxed to acquiescence through a copious sweat, which flowed from his face, as *blood* issues from a wound*;—he appears again to his disciples with a calm settled magnanimity. He seems even eager for the accomplishment of his ministry, and hastens to a close of this scene of suffering. *Arise*, says he to his languishing companions; *arise*; LET US BE GOING.

The whole relation is to me inimitably majestic and affecting: the reader, however, must not judge from my inadequate delineation of it, but have recourse to the narratives themselves, which deliver the transaction with a simplicity and pathos, that cannot be exceeded.

But I forbear to enlarge on this subject of our Lord's *agony*, because it has been discussed with much good sense and perspicuity by my venerable friend the *Rev. Timothy Wylde*, late *master* of the

* See some observations on this account of Luke xxii. 44. in my *Silva Critica*, part 1st.

free-school in *Nottingham*, in a sermon preached almost sixty-three years ago at that place, upon Matt. xxvi. 39*. from which I shall quote the *three* reasons assigned for this extraordinary emotion of our Saviour.

1. The *first* ground of *Christ's* fear and agony I shall mention, is his *knowing beforehand* the particular circumstances of his torment and death.

2. Another reason of our Saviour's fear and disorder was, the *remarkable severity* of his sufferings, and the many circumstances of cruelty, with which his death was attended.

3. The only other reason I assign for our Saviour's fear of death (and what I principally rely on) is his sense of *the important consequences*, which depended on his dying well.

Thus far this intelligent preacher, who reasons on each of these propositions in a rational, convincing, and instructive manner.

REMARK XXVII.

THERE is yet one circumstance more in the history of our Saviour, to me more beautiful and

* The author is still alive, and has the full enjoyment of his intellect in extreme old age. The sermon well deserves republication.

affecting than I am able to express ; upon which indeed, such is *my* opinion of its inimitable excellence ! I would even venture to rest the whole weight of the *Christian* fabric, if I might appeal for judgement, not to the *philosophical* theorist, the cold reasoner, the dull pedant, or the conceited scoffer ; but to the ingenuous inquirer after truth—to the breast of refined sentiment—to the heart that answers at the call of nature—to purity of taste, and delicacy of feeling.

When our Lord, at his last solemn conference with the apostles, previous to his apprehension and crucifixion, expressly declared before them all, that they would forsake him that very night, and be scattered abroad like *sheep*, which had lost their *shepherd* ; *Peter*, in the warmth of attachment, was offended with such an impeachment of his fidelity and resolution. *Though they ALL forsake thee*, he replies with the eagerness of a wounded spirit ; *yet will I never forsake thee*.

The subsequent history has told us the *event* of these boastful and positive pretensions. It corresponded exactly to the *prediction*. This *faithful* *adherent*, this *intrepid champion*, this affectionate disciple of his master, not only forsook him in the hour of distress and danger, but disavowed *three* several times, with the most solemn protestations,

testations, all connection with *Jesus of Nazareth*:

I KNOW NOT THE MAN.

After our Saviour's resurrection from the grave, he appeared, we are told, to his disciples at the sea of *Tiberias**, as they were fishing. They seem, from the circumstances of the narrative, to have been sensible that it was their master, whom they saw; but their astonishment at so extraordinary an interview appears to have overpowered their inquisitiveness; and none of them ventured to say, *Who art thou?*—(For the reader must be careful to remember, that, notwithstanding the repeated and express predictions of *Jesus* to this purpose, his disciples had settled as yet in their own minds no decided conviction of his resurrection from the grave.)—He dined with them upon some fish, which they had just taken; and after dinner, as they were placed round him, absorbed in admiration and respectful silence, afraid to question, from a consciousness, it is probable, of their blameable inattention to the reiterated prediction of his own death;—this benevolent and forgiving master suddenly turns to *Peter*, and with accents of ineffable complacency and an unexampled delicacy of reproof,—*Simon! son of Jonas*, says he, *lovest thou me*

* John xxi.

more than THESE? pointing at the same time to the rest of the disciples, who were sitting by. “*Thou* didst indeed profess a determination to “continue with me, whatever might become of “*them*. What dost thou say now? Are then *thy* “fidelity and *thy* love superiour to *their’s*?

Now, can the imagination of man conceive any thing more delightful and affecting than this incident? What nobler demonstration can be desired or imagined, than this gentle expostulation, of a sweet, compassionate, and forgiving temper;—of a magnanimity superiour to all animosity and resentment;—of a sympathetic consciousness of the extreme difficulty of obedience in human nature with the prospect of death before it? Could the Saviour of mankind be represented, by any contrivance of ingenuity, in a more amiable point of view? Certainly, it were impossible.—

We may figure to ourselves the confusion of the whole company on this occasion, and the peculiar perturbation and shame of *Peter*. His usual vivacity summoned, however, presence of mind sufficient for a reply; *Yea, Lord! thou knowest that I love thee.*

Now, at this period of the transaction, let any one determine for himself, upon the maxims of experience and the ordinary operation of human feelings, whether, if he were placed in the same circum-

circumstances with our Lord, *his* answer to *Peter's* declaration of love would not have been attended with some *selfish* symptoms, some expression of *resentment*, some severity of *reproof*. But the heart of *Jesus* was thoroughly refined from the dross of all sordid and ignoble passion. *He saith unto him:*
 “*Feed my lambs.* I require no sacrifice to ap-
 “*pease my vanity, no public acknowledgment of*
 “*thy fault, no abject submission, at thy hands.*
 “*I shall be satisfied with thy future services in*
 “*return for thy former infidelity. Shew thy love,*
 “*if not in adhering to thy rash pretension, in*
 “*being at least a faithful pastor of my flock. If*
 “*thou couldst forsake their shepherd in the hour*
 “*of danger, forsake not them.*”

It seems probable, that neither *Peter* himself, nor the other disciples then present, apprehended the full force of their master's expostulation. He therefore *thrice* repeats his affecting question; *Simon! son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?* alluding, with most exquisite address and pathos, to *Peter's threefold* denial of him*. This repetition produced the effect, which it were na-

* This propriety did not escape *Sedulius*, pasch. hymn. iv. fin.

*Hoc terno sermone monens, ut terna negantis
 Culpa recens parili numero purgata maneret.*

tural to have expected from it. *Peter* at least appears to have felt the full force of this delicate appeal. He *was grieved* at the *third* proposal of the question; and felt desirous of putting an end to so embarrassing a conversation. *Lord!* he replies, *thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee**.

As a suitable appendage to the whole series of the preceding remarks, the following passage from *Eusebius*† appears to me worthy of presentation through the medium of this little work to the *English* reader.

“ Those unbelievers, therefore, who stile *Jesus*
 “ a deluder and impostor, and a thousand other
 “ reproachful names, may be reasonably asked,
 “ Whether their researches have informed them
 “ of any other deceiver, who has led his deluded
 “ hearers to gentleness, moderation, sobriety, and
 “ every other virtue, by his doctrine:—whether
 “ they are authorized in stigmatizing with such
 “ atrocious epithets one, who did not allow even a

* That incident also, recorded in *Matt. xxvi. 23.* is wonderfully touching; and all the circumstances of that night breathe a spirit of melancholy grandeur, to which I know no parallel in the literary monuments of mankind.

† *Demonst. Evang. iii. 3.*

“ look

“ look of lascivious design on women :—whether
 “ he could be an impostor, who delivered the
 “ perfection of philosophy, by instructing his dis-
 “ ciples to communicate their substance with the
 “ needy ; by inculcating a submission to hard-
 “ ship, and a social feeling of beneficence as of
 “ prime importance :—whether he could be an
 “ impostor, who endeavoured to withdraw man-
 “ kind from the low and promiscuous and riotous
 “ intercourse of a rabble to an application of their
 “ leisure in studying the oracles of God :—he who
 “ departed from all falsehood, and recommended
 “ truth as of superiour excellence to all other
 “ things ; who discouraged even swearing in a
 “ just cause, and much more perjury ;—how can
 “ he be justly called a deceiver ? But why need
 “ I enlarge in this place, when the tenour of his
 “ doctrines may be learned from what I have be-
 “ fore advanced ? which will incline every lover
 “ of truth to regard him, not as a deceiver, but
 “ a truly godlike man ; not as a teacher of a trite
 “ and vulgar philosophy, but of a divine and
 “ holy system ; endeavouring to revive* the pri-
 “ mitive manners, which had disappeared among
 “ mankind, of those *Hebrews* of old time, the fa-
 “ vourites of God. Such in short is the spirit of

* This idea has an agreeable correspondence with that, which I suggested above, p. 98,

“ his *morality*. Let us now consider whether
“ the leading points of his doctrine, relative to
“ *opinions*, entitle him to the appellation of a
“ deceiver.

“ Is he not then described as devoting himself
“ to the only sovereign God of heaven and earth,
“ the creator of the universe; and attaching all
“ his followers to the same great being? And do
“ not the words of his doctrine to this day carry
“ up the understandings both of *Greeks* and *Bar-*
“ *barians* to the supreme God, to the disregard
“ of all visible existences? Did he not prove his
“ sincerity by disallowing the worship of a mul-
“ tiplicity of Gods to the *Gentile*, beguiled and
“ fallen in reality from the only true *theology*?—
“ Why should he not be called rather an admira-
“ ble teacher of piety than a seducer, who distri-
“ buted, through the recommendation of a divine
“ power, among all mankind, the truths known
“ only to the *Hebrews*; so that just conceptions
“ of God are no longer confined to a few, but
“ to multitudes of *Barbarians* before uncivilized,
“ as well as *Greeks*?—Or, will they call him a
“ deceiver, because he did not direct his disci-
“ ples to know God with the sacrifices of ani-
“ mals, with blood poured on altars, or vege-
“ table incense? looking upon these things as
“ low

“ low and earthly, and in no wise suited to an
 “ immortal nature ; but regarding as more ac-
 “ ceptable to God than any sacrifice, an upright
 “ observance of his commandments ; by which
 “ he taught his disciples, through the purification
 “ of body and spirit, and the ornament of an un-
 “ sullied mind and pious opinions, a resemblance
 “ of the Divinity ; expressly saying, *Be ye perfect,*
 “ *as your Father is perfect.*”

To sum up the result of the foregoing *Remarks*
 in few words. In the preceding detail of argu-
 ments, I have touched on *some* striking circum-
 stances of our *Saviour's* character, which appeared
 to me peculiarly worthy of admiration : but the
 short volumes of his history will furnish many
 more proofs of wisdom and virtue, to those dis-
 posed to search after them ; which, if my fond-
 ness for the subject does not mislead my judge-
 ment, the collective annals of our species would
 endeavour to parallel in vain. Every individual
 must be left to his own determination in this
 case, and undoubtedly will feel impressions pe-
 culiar to himself ; impressions, unavoidably di-
 versified by a thousand particularities, that elude
 conjecture, and set calculation at defiance ; par-
 ticularities of natural constitution, education,
 and

and modes of life : but let him be careful to decide without passion, without prejudice, without conceit ; and to report the true verdict of his conscience. For my part, expatiated as I have through almost the whole compass of ancient literature, I declare in the most serious manner and the most unreserved language, that I perceive in the *gospels* more unequivocal marks of authenticity, than in any similar work whatsoever, *moral* or *historical*, whether of ancient or modern times :—I protest, that the very idea of their spuriousness, as a forgery of some impostor, constitutes to my mind a problem of far more difficult solution than the proposition, which it is intended to overthrow :—I believe accordingly, that the *Evangelists* must have given us, from OCULAR ATTESTATION, faithful narratives of the life and actions of JESUS CHRIST of *Nazareth*, the MESSIAH of the *Jews*, the SAVIOUR of mankind, and the beloved SON OF GOD.

REMARK XXVIII.

UPON a mature discussion of the superior advantages accruing from it, the *low condition* of life, in which *Jesus* of *Nazareth* was placed, will be found one circumstance of the *Christian* dispensation, eminently declarative of the wisdom of
it's

it's author. The great and noble are comparatively few in any nation to the general mass of the community. As, therefore, it seems unanimously agreed by *theologians*, and, in my opinion, upon principles of good sense not to be controverted, that the *example* of the anointed prophet was a point of principal importance; an inferior condition comes recommended strongly, in the first instance, by it's adaptation to the circumstances of the majority of our species.

The topic, suggested also in the epistle to the *Hebrews**, is applicable to the present *proposition*, and is of no secondary consequence. Elevated ranks in society†, so far removed from the wants and distresses, to which the generality of men are perpetually exposed by the vicissitudes of for-

* C. ii. v. 17, 18.

† This argument is illustrated with the customary good sense of that excellent writer *Archbishop Secker*, in the 7th *Sermon* of vol. 1st on 1 Cor. i. 22, 23, 24.

Juvenal has delivered a maxim pertinent to the spirit of the present disquisition: Sat. viii. 73.

*Rarus enim ferme sensus communis in illa
Fortunâ.*

By which he means, that the favourites of fortune are usually strangers to those sympathetic affections, which extend to our *common* humanity, and operate in universal undistinguishing benevolence.

tune,

tune, are *not* the stations for suitable improvements in those affections, that peculiarly become humanity. A more humble sphere is the soil best fitted for the sympathetic virtues; they *open fairest* in the sequestered vale, and are seldom found to flourish, but when engrafted on the stock of *experimental suffering**. Many bright parts of our Saviour's character could never have beamed forth to enlighten the path and direct the steps of his faithful followers, had he not learned from those distresses and embarrassments, in which his condition almost unavoidably involved him, to feel for the miseries of man from their impressions on himself: nor could he have accommodated his doctrines to the world at large without an ability of entering into the affections, sentiments, and feelings of the majority of his brethren by a participation of their condition: not to mention that pre-eminent accomplishments and true nobility of character have in all ages been formed in the school of rigid discipline under the tuition of adversity; and that the hill of *Virtue*, steep of ascent and rugged in it's progress, can only be climbed by toilsome perseverance up the steps of *Sorrow*.

* Whence that of *Dido* :

Non ignara mala miseris succurrere disco.

Moreover,

Moreover, this appointment is conformable to the pretensions of an authentic revelation from the Deity in another respect. The personal influence of a subordinate member of society, destitute of secular distinctions, family attachments, and the allurements of opulence and grandeur, cannot be supposed to have gained *many* proselytes to an institution, which afforded rather a prospect of affliction, than of ease and comfort; a state of warfare more than a station of enjoyment: whereas many disciples might have been suspected, with good reason, of seduction, by favour, gratitude, or expectation, to the party of their patron and benefactor. The friends and followers of a teacher, circumstanced as *Jesus* was, will countenance no suspicion of influence from indirect and unworthy motives. In what could *their* devotion to such a master have its origin, but in the attractions of unendowed *virtue* and the efficacy of simple *truth*?

REMARK XXVI.

THOSE characters, which exhibit themselves in the *actions, speeches, and discourses* of the various personages brought upon the stage of history, have been deemed by the most impartial and judicious critics more removed from every semblance

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lance

lance of design and artifice, and more significant of *authenticity* and real *nature*, than such as writers delineate in elaborate descriptions composed for the purpose *. In the former case, your mind is presented with the spontaneous exposition, which the naked circumstances alone deliver; in the other, you read the studied opinions of the professed author, in which can hardly fail to betray itself a propensity, inseparable from writers, to exaggerate or disparage, according to the exigencies of the particular purpose under contemplation. Indeed it is evident at the first sight, on which side of these different processes the superiority must lie with respect to the probable *authenticity* of a narrative. And, in this view, the works of *Homer*, undoubtedly the most ancient composition of *heathen* genius, deserve peculiar commendation; for in them no violation of this mode of portraying characters, if we except one or two trivial instances, can be found: an assertion,

* Expressior videatur necesse est et perfectior eorum imitatio, qui non rem gestam referunt, verum quodammodò gerunt ipsi atque agunt, cùm dissimulatâ personâ suâ alios introducunt, qui coram spectatoribus res ipsas sistant. The late *professor Cooke's* Prælection. p. vi. prefixed to his edition of *Aristotle's Poetics*, published at Cambridge, with notes that display an accurate learning and a sagacious insight into the sense of his author.

which

Which would not be justly made of any other *Græcian* or *Roman* author, to the best of my recollection at this moment. In *Homer's* poetry, all is action and animation, arising from crowded events and busy characters :

Quicquid agunt homines; votum; timor, ira, voluptas;
Gaudia, discursus.

The poet never appears in person; and only operates, like the mind in the corporeal frame, with a vigorous energy, but undefineable and unseen*. The same observations are strictly applicable also to the histories of the *Old Testament*; and it is to me an agreeable consideration, that two works of such indubitable antiquity, as the *Bible* and *Homer*, should thus agree in a circumstance highly consonant to the simplicity of primæval manners; in wearing so plausible a mark of authenticity; with regard to the pretensions of an early origin, stamped on their features. But the most superficial observer need not be told, and the most forward caviller cannot deny, that the historical parts of the *New Testament* ought not to concede the palm of superiority to any writings whatsoever upon the subject of this innate recommendation

* *Homer* describes no qualities or virtues, censures no manners; makes no encomiums, nor gives characters himself, but brings his actors still in view. 'Tis they who shew themselves. *Shaftsbury's Characteristics*, i. p. 197.

of veracity. Now it is manifest, that laboured encomiums of the personages introduced, or minute and balanced estimations of their worth, and philosophical investigations of their motives to action, are the proper productions of students, schooled in rhetoric and exercised in oratory; neither suited to the taste, nor attainable by the powers, of plain uneducated men. A simple detail, therefore, of occurrences, divested of these artificial and adventitious ornaments, seems not only more accordant to every rational idea of honest intention and authentic report, but is perfectly correspondent to the *reputed authors* of the *gospel histories*: so that the stile and colour of these narratives is at once more favourable in itself to our preconceived notions of veracity, and harmonizes also with the *political condition* of the writers. Indeed, a review of the authenticity of the *gospels* may be most fitly compared to our progress from the fountain-head of a river along it's banks. We find, as we proceed, a perpetual influx of auxiliary streams contributing to augment the torrent.—I will corroborate these sentiments by a pertinent quotation from a most useful and important work*.

“ If

* *Lord Montboddo's Origin and Progress of Languages*: a performance, not capable of being relished by superficial
and

“ If a narrative is much ornamented, it has
 “ not the appearance of *truth*, but of a *tale*, de-
 “ signed either to impose upon the hearer, or to
 “ make an ostentatious shew of the author’s ge-
 “ nius. Hence it comes, that the narrative of
 “ *Homer* is more credible than that of *Virgil*; not
 “ only because it is more circumstantial, which
 “ also gives a great air of truth to a story, but
 “ because it is less ornamented.”

Hence we may learn more fully the propriety of that apostrophe, so feelingly addressed by the *Son of Man* to his omnipotent commissioner*:

I thank thee, (I entirely assent to thy conduct in this respect) O ! Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from men of wisdom and knowledge, and revealing them to BABES.

This is a sentiment replete with wisdom: and it is most indisputable, that the *evangelical histories* would have been assailable by very serious objection and conceited readers, but in my estimation worthy of much greater approbation than it has received from the public, notwithstanding some capital errors in the *theory*, and various inaccuracies arising from a confined knowledge of modern publications and too partial an acquaintance with the *Greek* literature at large. See Part ii. Book 4th. Chap. 10th.

———— non ego paucis

Offendar maculis.

* Matt. xi. 25.

tions, had they been composed by men of eloquence and learning; and the dispensation itself encumbered with peculiar difficulties, if it's primitive teachers and professors had principally issued from the mansions of the rich or the schools of the philosophers. We have reason to rejoice, that *not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, were originally called* *.

REMARK XXIX.

THERE are some extraordinary circumstances in the character of St. *Peter*, so entirely conformable to human nature, as enhance the supposition of imposture to a very considerable height of improbability, and are an able advocate for the genuineness of the *gospels*.

This apostle put in practice on every occasion the advice, which *Peleus* gave to his son *Achilles*, when he dismissed him to the *Trojan* war †:

ΑΙΕΝ ΑΡΙΣΤΕΥΕΙΝ, ΚΑΙ ΥΠΕΙΡΟΧΟΝ ΕΜΜΕΝΑΙ ΑΛΛΩΝ.

*A brave pre-eminence above thy peers
Be thy ambition.*

When *Jesus* (to illustrate this *remark* by instances) was walking on the sea, *Peter* alone had the

* 1 Cor. i. 26.

† Il. A. 782.

resolution

resolution to quit the vessel, and trust himself to the surface of the waters *. *Peter* had the honour of giving the only true answer to that arduous question of our Lord, *Whom say ye that I am? Thou art the Christ*, says our apostle, *the Son of the living God* †.—*Peter* undertook to reprove his master, amidst the silence of the rest of the disciples, for talking of his sufferings and death ‡.—*Peter* alone ventured to deliver his opinion upon that extraordinary circumstance of our Lord's *transfiguration* on the mount §.—*Peter* had the courage to *enter the sepulchre*, when *John*, as it should seem, was afraid to venture; with a view of examining the place where our Lord had lain ||.—*Peter* alone, after the resurrection of *Jesus*, cast himself into the sea, to join his master upon the shore ¶.—The *Jews* themselves appear to have considered *Peter* as the most active and forward and most favoured (as Matt. xvii. 1. Mark v. 37.) of all the disciples. The collectors of the money for the temple apply to *him* for our Lord's contribution, and *he* reports their inquiry to his master **.—His inquisitive temper distinguishes itself

* Matt. 14. 28.

† Matt. xvi. 15, 16.

‡ Vers. 22.

§ Matt. xvii. 4.

|| John xx. 6.

¶ John xxi. 7.

** Matt. xvii. 24, 25.

also on other occasions of less moment*.—And, when *Jesus* was apprehended, *Peter* gave good proof of a seemingly determined resolution to defend his master, and to fulfil his late protestations of adhering to him, though all his fellow-disciples should prove faithless: for *John* has expressly informed us, that it was *Simon Peter*, who drew his sword, and smote a servant of the high-priest, and cut off his right ear†.

“ Yes;” most men will be apt to say, “ such
 “ a character as this, who made such liberal pro-
 “ fessions of love and service, and moreover
 “ appeared to entertain juster notions of his
 “ master’s person and office than the other apos-
 “ tles, might naturally have deserved more de-
 “ pendence to be placed on him in a time of dan-
 “ ger, than those, who by their silence had suf-
 “ ficiently declared themselves to be possessed
 “ of less forwardness and resolution: especially
 “ too after the voluntary, the public, and unre-
 “ served avowal of his determination to be, like
 “ another *Abdiel*,

—————“ *faithful found*
 “ *Among the faithless, faithful only he ‡.*”

* Matt. xv. 15. Luke xii. 41. Matt. xviii. 21,
 xix. 27. John xiii. 6. See also Luke v. 5. viii. 45,
 † xviii. 10.

‡ ————— ὁ ἐν πολλοῖς ἔργῳ
 Μοιρῶν προσεύξει πιστῶν. Soph. Elect.

In

In this train, I say, *most* men would be disposed to reason on this case: and, if a *Galilean* fisherman, unpractised, as one of his solitary occupation and insulated life must inevitably be, in the study of human manners, had spun this history from the thread of his own invention, I cannot entertain a doubt but *Peter's* conduct would have been *uniformly* preserved through the piece, in a manner correspondent to the former delineation of his character and the boldness of his pretensions. But the picture, now presented to our view, exhibits a much more probable representation of real life; and is indeed so accurate in it's resemblance, as to appear beyond the ability of inventive ingenuity; proclaiming the designer of it to have worked from an undoubted original before him. If not, let our adversaries give some reasonable account of that comprehensive imitator, who surveyed this exact transcript of life and manners in the confined limits only of his own bosom.

We are told by a surgeon of eminence in his profession *, that it was judged necessary to amputate severally one of the arms of two boys in the hospital, of the same age and similar consti-

* I recollect perfectly well to have read this account in some volume of the *Annual Register*, but have several times attempted in vain to find the passage,

tutions.

tutions. One consented at once to the operation without betraying any symptoms of timidity, when the opinion of the surgeon was declared to him on the preceding night. The other was with much difficulty indeed persuaded to acquiesce, and shewed signs of the utmost horror and dejection at the thought of the approaching catastrophe. What was the event? The boy, of so much readiness and spirit, sunk into timidity; and endured the operation with no degree of firmness: the other supported his severe trial with a true manly resolution*.—The relator observes, I think, that he had been witness to a similar issue in other instances of this nature.

And here let me notice, before I quit this subject, with what propriety and beauty our Lord addresses himself to *this* apostle, as well on account of his usual forwardness, as the vehemence of his late protestations: *And he cometh to the disciples and findeth them asleep, and SAITH TO PETER;*

* “ Mention is made in the epistle of the church of
 “ *Smyrna*, and in other ancient records, of some rash and
 “ presumptuous *Christians*, who offered themselves to *mar-*
 “ *tyrdom*, and who, when they were condemned, lost all
 “ courage and deserted their cause; whilst others, who
 “ had been diffident of themselves, and had retired, being
 “ discovered and seized, died in a most *Christian* manner.”

JORTIN'S *Remarks*, Book ii. Part 1.

So,

*So, could ye not watch with me one hour * ?* A fine reproof of his temerity, and a secret intimation, as it were, of the approaching dereliction of his engagement: and especially, as the circumstance is recorded specifically by *Mark: And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping; and* SAITH TO PETER: SIMON! *art THOU asleep? Couldst not THOU WATCH ONE HOUR †?*

This account gives me an opportunity of pointing out a parallel mark of authenticity, from a conformity to real life, in the history of our Saviour.

His agony of spirit on the nearer approach of his crucifixion could not be exceeded. The eloquent physician has exhausted the powers of language in his description of it. But the heroism, with which the Saviour of the world, notwithstanding this previous dejection of soul, supported the exquisite tortures of the cross, ennobles our common nature, and furnishes the most illustrious example of fortitude and magnanimity, that has been exhibited since the foundation of the world. And, I believe, it will be found true from observation, that minds of a fine and delicate texture, not only not deficient in spirit and resolution on other occasions, but on the contrary dis-

* Matt. xxvi. 40.

† C. xiv. v. 37.

tinguished

tinguished for their intrepidity, are agitated with a horror proportionate to their sensibility, on the near prospect of bodily pain. The conduct of *Socrates*, at the conclusion of life, reflects the highest honour on that admirable man: but, not to insist on other circumstances of superiority on the part of *Jesus*, a draught of hemlock, and the anguish of suspension by the hands and feet, perforated with nails, will admit of no comparison. The *Athenian* was in every respect truly great *; but we do no injury to truth and him, when we assert, that our *Nazarene* was greater than he.

* *Porphyry*, with a view, it is probable, of establishing the superior virtue of his master *Pythagoras* (a character in reality not less exalted, as far as we can judge from the accounts delivered of him, than *Socrates* himself) *Porphyry*, I say, propagates some calumnies against the illustrious *Athenian*, which are eagerly caught up by *Cyril*, to the disgrace of this *Christian apologist*. Neither *Christ* nor *Pythagoras* wish to build their praises

On the fall'n ruins of another's fame.

See *Cyril*, cont. Jul. p. 186. 216. to whom, perhaps, his own reflection on *Timæus*, p. 208. is applicable; that his "ill-will to *Socrates* impairs his credibility."

REMARK

REMARK XXX.

THE manner, in which the apostles, with all simplicity and freedom, mention their own *failings*, and in which *Matthew* and *John* make no exception of themselves from the number of those, whom their master reproves for their faithlessness and stupidity ; must be allowed by every candid person to carry with it a pleasing air of impartiality and veracity *. Indeed this acknowledgement of infirmity, error, and misconduct in life and in opinion, is characteristic of noble minds, and could hardly be expected from men of mean acquirements, low birth, and probably contracted hearts, without some powerful extraneous principle ; such a principle, for instance, as *Christianity*, whose enlightening doctrines are so plain as to accommodate themselves to every capacity, and are calculated to exert their ennobling influence alike on the highest and lowest orders of society.

I have always been much delighted with a passage in *Celsus*, which falls in very exactly with the

* *Pisides* apud *Suidam*.

Οὐκ ἐστὶ ταῦτα πρὸς χάριν κειχρωμένα,
Ἀπλοὶ δὲ παντὶς τῆς ἀληθείας λόγοι.

train of these ideas. “*Hippocrates*,” says he^{*},
 “has informed us, that he once mistook the su-
 “tures of the skull for a fracture : in the true spi-
 “rit of a great genius, conscious of his extraordi-
 “nary accomplishments. For the qualifications
 “of little minds are but a small amount, and will
 “admit of no deduction. Indeed the simple
 “confession of actual mistakes is peculiarly be-
 “coming such accomplished characters, who can
 “easily spare a little from their copious stores :
 “and especially a confession upon those points,
 “which may prove beneficial to posterity.” In
 this view the following remarks of *Eusebius* will
 give strength to the argument before us :

“*Matthew*, the *apostle*, was not conversant with
 “men of honourable occupations in his former
 “life, but came from among *tax-gatherers* and

* Cels. Lib. viii. C. 4. The passage alluded to occurs
 in *Hippocrates* de Morb. Vulg. v. 7. 27. *Julian* also refers
 to it in his 59th *epistle* : and *Plutarch*, ii. p. 83. And equal
 commendation is due to our countryman *Sydenham* for a
 similar confession in his Treatise *De Hydrope*. *Equidem*
probè memini, &c. p. 487. Edit. Lugd. Bat.—*Claudian* sings
 with great sweetness on this topic, de sext. cons. Hon. v.
 592.

Nil cumulat verbisque nihil FIDUCIA celat :
Fucati sermonis opem MENS CONSCIA LAUDIS
Abnuit.

extortioners.

“ extortioners. This appears from none of the
 “ evangelists, not even from his fellow-apostle
 “ John, nor yet from *Luke*, nor *Mark*; but *Mat-*
 “ *thew* himself proclaims the disgrace, and be-
 “ comes his own accuser. Hear how expressly
 “ he mentions the circumstance in the *gospel*
 “ written by himself: *Jesus passing by thence, saw*
 “ *a man sitting at the receipt of custom, named*
 “ MATTHEW *. And afterwards, when he enu-
 “ merates the *apostles*, he says: *Thomas and MAT-*
 “ THEW THE PUBLICAN †.” And these obser-
 vations are succeeded by others, which the reader
 will not think unworthy of consultation.

It is superfluous to mention a particular so
 well known to those conversant in these subjects,
 that the same recommendation arises to *Mark's*
gospel from the specification of *Peter's* name in
 several instances peculiar to *that* narrative; be-
 cause we are told by the early writers of *Christian*
 antiquity, that *Peter* assisted the author in the
 composition of his history.

The disinterestedness of the *evangelists* will lose
 no reputation by a contrast with the *two* histo-
 rians of antiquity, between whom and them a com-
 parison may most properly be instituted; *Xeno-*
phon and *Julius Cæsar*. The sacred penmen cer-

* C. ix. v. 9.

† C. x. v. 3.

tainly keep more aloof from *personality* and *exaggeration*, than either of these celebrated writers; of whom it will be sufficient to remark on this occasion, that the *Athenian* evidently shews *himself* through the latter part of his history; and the *Roman*, beyond all controversy, from the testimony of other historians, dissembled the truth in his own favour, respecting, for example, the invasion of *our* country. The insinuation of our most finished poet is not more satirical than true:

Cæsar himself might whisper he was BEAT.

REMARK XXXI.

THE manner, in which the *gospel-historians* have related the death of *Judas**, appears to me so singular, that I am persuaded no *two* writers could possibly deliver such *apparently differing* accounts of the *same* transaction, who had not the *reality* itself under contemplation at the time; and, seeing no difficulty or obscurity themselves, (which is a case of perpetual occurrence) could have no suspicion of creating difficulty and obscurity to

* The reader, who feels himself so inclined, may read some further *remarks* on this circumstance in my *Memoirs*, p. 381. and the *second* part of the *Silva Critica*, on the text, sect. 84.

others

others by any diversities of expression. My argument upon this topic carries with it, I must confess, irresistible conviction to my own mind; and I shall rejoice, if I so conduct it as to communicate an equal impression in favour of the books, which contain it, to the mind of the reader.

Now my conclusion in favour of the authenticity of the *gospels*, from the *two* accounts of the death of *Judas*, is founded upon these *two* suppositions:

1. That, whether the later historian of the two, *Matthew* and *Luke*, had seen or not the history of his predecessor, the circumstances of the false apostle's death must be, in all probability, perfectly known to them both: though the more reasonable supposition certainly is, that *Luke*, from his connection with *Paul* and the leading men in the church, and indeed from the close union of all its members at that early period, must have been acquainted with the *gospel* of *St. Matthew*; whom I should judge for many reasons to be the *earlier* writer*.

* An early date of *Matthew's* gospel, is countenanced, in my judgement, by many and high probabilities: and I am of opinion, that the other hypothesis, of a late publication, has not a single probability to support it. See *Mr. Townsend's* excellent work on the *gospels*.

M

2. That

2. That the immediate cause of the death of *Judas* was a *dysentery*, brought on by excessive sorrow and perturbation of spirits.

As to the *first* position, it is scarcely possible to imagine, that the last circumstances of the life of *Judas*, who had acted such an extraordinary part, could have been unknown to any of the first disciples : circumstances too, so extraordinary in themselves, must have been the subject of frequent conversation and enquiry in the church. Indeed St. *Peter*, or rather St. *Luke*, has expressly told us, that the death of *Judas* was a matter of public notoriety to *all the dwellers at Jerusalem* *.

My *second* position I find myself able to establish upon very solid ground ; and I thereby bring the sacred writers to a perfect *consistency* of narrative. This is, in my apprehension, a very important point indeed : for no ingenuity of man can strain the two accounts of this transaction to a satisfactory reconciliation upon any other supposition ; and I cannot but think, that a strong suspicion would lie against the *general credibility* of the *evangelists*, if they could be proved to have given *contradictory* relations of so remarkable and notorious a fact.

* Acts i. 19.

Matthew tells us, that *Judas* cast down the money in the temple, and went and HANGED HIMSELF; as our translation has it: but I say, *And went and DIED WITH ANGUISH*: ἀπελθων απηγζαλο, says the original*. This word is only once used by the *Greek* translators in the *canonical* books of the *Old-Testament*, and then in the account of *Ahithophel's* death†; who is supposed to have put a period to his existence in the same way with *Judas*. The *Hebrew* word employed upon that occasion is קח, which is also adopted by all the other *oriental* versions, to which I have access, both here and in *St. Matthew*, except by the *Coptic* and *Persic*; who seem, however, to have followed the usual acceptation of the passage. Some of the *Rabbins* interpret that word of *choaking with sorrow*, and attribute the death of *Ahithophel* to the gradual effects of *disappointment* and *vexation*. And this interpretation is rendered extremely probable by considering that תלה is the word used in a great variety of passages for *hanging*, and that קח is never once clearly employed in this sense. I make no account of a passage in *Job*, where the reading, I think, is not genuine; and, if it be, our present translation is improper.

* Matt. xxvii. 5.

† 2 Sam, xvii. 23.

It is observable, that in the history of *Saul's* distemper*, which was certainly a *melancholy*†, the *Septuagint* says, that *an evil spirit from the Lord* CHOAKT HIM: employing a word exactly equivalent to that used by *St. Matthew*. And *Josephus* says, that *certain affections and dæmons invaded Saul, bringing upon him SUFFOCATIONS and STRANGLINGS*‡. And my sense of the *Hebrew* word, is corroborated by the *Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem* on *Gen. xxii. 20.* which say, that, when *Sarah* was told of *Abraham's* intention to sacrifice *Isaac*, she was SUFFOCATED, AND DIED THROUGH ANXIETY§.

It is evident from these authorities, that *St. Matthew's* expression will not only bear the translation, which I propose, but, considering that he was a *Jew*, rather requires it.

As to *St. Luke's* relation of this matter, it is a just and classical description of a man exhausted and perishing by the violence of a *dysentery*. The following is a proper translation of it.

* 1 Sam. xvi. 14.

† See some observations on this point in my *Silva Critica*, part i. sect. 12.

‡ Τοις Σαυλον δε περιηρχετο παθη τινα και δαιμονια, πειγμους αυτου και στραγγαλας επιφεροντα Ant. vi. 8. 2.

§ κρηκεν εν πτωσει ηρωικη. See *Alexis* in *Athen. Deip.* vi. 2. and ix. 12. and others to the same purpose.

He fell flat upon his face, and made a noise by bursting in the middle; and all his bowels were poured out.*

The *πρηνης γενομεν* of our *Evangelist* may be well illustrated by this passage of *Euripides*, *Alcest.* 141.

Ἢδη προωπης εἶη καὶ ψυχὸρράγει.

Not unlike this is—*ῥήξει αὐτὸς πρηνεῖς.* *Sap. Sol.* iv. 19.

The phrase—*ελακῆσε μεσ*—is admirably vindicated by a gloss of *Hesychius*, which I long ago corrected from this expression of *St. Luke*: *Μεσοφερδεῖν, ΜΕΣΟΛΑΚΕΙΝ.*—To the same purpose this of *Plautus Curc.* ii. 1, 7.

Nihil metuo, nisi ne medius dirumpar miser; and that of Virgil:

————— *RUMPANTUR ut ILIA Codro:*

and many others of the same kind, derived from the *Greeks*. So *Aristophanes*, *Ran.* 955. *ὠφέλες μεσ* διαβραγῆναι.

And that the words—*εξεχυθὴ πάντα τὰ σπλαγχνὰ αὐτοῦ*—suitably describe the effects of a *dysentery*,

* *Acts* i. 18.

the learned reader may be convinced by consulting the *Scholiast* on Aristoph. Vesp. 604.

It seems pretty clear, that *Jehoram* died of this distemper. In 2 Chron. xxi. 18, 19. the following account is given of it.

Jehovah smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease; and his BOWELS CAME OUT, and he died of grievous evacuations.

Τῶν ἐντέρων ἐκρυέντων, says *Josephus* in his relation of this malady. Ant. ix. 5. 2.

Dr. *Mead's* testimony is very explicit and satisfactory.

Non alius, ut mihi videtur, fuit hic morbus, quàm gravis dysenteria. In hac enim intestina exulcerantur;—nonnunquàm etiàm carnosæ quædam ramenta simul descendunt; ità ut ipsa intestina ejici videantur. The last particular I have known myself to take place in this disorder.

The account, given by *Josephus* of the death of *Aristobulus*, is very much to our purpose.

Remorse for his crime brings a distemper upon Aristobulus; and, his mind continually dwelling upon the murder, he wasted away, and discharged much blood, as HIS BOWELS WERE TORN BY EXCESSIVE SORROW.*

* Τῶν σπλαγχνῶν ὑπ' ἀκραίᾳ τῆς λύπης σπαράττωμενος, αἷμα ἀναβάλλει. Bell. Jud. i. 3. 6. Compare Ant. xiii. 2, 3.

Another

Another passage of the same author is too pertinent and striking to be omitted. It was intended, no doubt, for a description of the *same disorder*; which the preceding circumstances of the person's history might lead us to attribute also to the *same cause* of *sorrow* and *vexation*. Indeed experience abundantly shews, that these passions *physically* operate upon the *bowels*: and from this fact, many *figurative* expressions both in the *Old* and *New Testament* are derived, and in *profane* authors also*.

Zenodorus, HIS BOWELS BURSTING and a large effusion of blood ensuing, dies at Antioch in Syria†.

It is very sensibly suggested by my friend *Mr. Walker* of *Nottingham* in his *second sermon* on the character of *Judas*, that “the traitor
“ was designed by his employers to have acted
“ a still farther part, and had himself intend-
“ ed to have appeared a more considerable ac-
“ tor, in the transactions of the succeeding day,
“ if his sudden and unexpected repentance had
“ not defeated the design.

* *Angor* est *animi* vel *corporis* *cruciatus*; propriè à *Græco* *σπλαγχν*, id est, *strangulatione* dictus. Undè et *faucium* dolor *angina* vocatur: *Festus* in v. *angor*.

† Παγισθῶ αὐτὸν τῇ σπλαγχνῇ, καὶ πολλὰ ὑποχωρήσῃ αἷματι.
Ant. xv. 10. 3.

“ It would have been a great point gained,
 “ in order to support the appearance of disin-
 “ terested justice, and turn the popular preju-
 “ dice against him, if one of his own disciples
 “ should stand forth his accuser, and give tes-
 “ timony to the supposed crimes, which they
 “ meant to alledge against him.”

In connection with this extremely probable *hypothesis*, we may see the reason, in a detestation of such perfidy, of the uniformly degrading terms, in which *Judas* is spoken of by the *evangelists*: the propriety of recording that circumstance of his *throwing down the money*, as the act of one, who had *not* performed his *engagements*; and the reasonableness of such *extreme remorse*, as to be productive of so violent and unusual a dissolution.

My *two* propositions have thus been established, I presume, to a very high degree of probability. Now the proposition deducible from these premises is obvious and simple; namely this: No *two* persons in their senses, who had set themselves to fabricate a *fictitious* history, would ever have given *two such* accounts of the *same* transaction. Impostors, always on their guard to avoid a suspicion of collusion and deceit, would certainly have studied to adjust their relations to a greater

greater appearance of agreement and consistency; nor have trusted to the ingenuity and uncertainty of criticism for future vindication. There could not have arisen, in my judgement, more decisive evidence of an artless unsuspecting integrity, delivering to posterity the record of a *real transaction* within the compass of their *own knowledge*. Such a degree of *obscurity*, and so much *appearance* of inconsistency, is highly advantageous to the cause of truth. The relations are very different, but, on a closer inspection, evidently describe a similar mode of death: as in *arithmetic* and *geometry*, *numbers* and *figures* very distinct are in both sciences brought into relation with each other by the intervention of a *third**. Every man's experience will inform him, how apt we are to omit in a relation little circumstances, very essential to give *another* a clear insight into the fact, which *our* perfect knowledge of it leads *us* to disregard; not reflecting, that an entire stranger to it cannot possibly possess the same train of ideas, that ocular observation has infused into our own

* An observation of *Strabo's* relative to the *geographical inconsistencies* of writers is very applicable to the present case; but on account of it's length, I forbear quotation, and content myself with referring to it: p. 41. im. edit. Amst.

minds.

minds. No error more natural than this; no presumption more customary both in books and in common life.—But it is time to leave the reader to his own reflections.

Yet I cannot conclude *this article* without specifying another argument in behalf of the authenticity of the *gospels* from a *seeming contradiction* and a *real agreement*, respecting *Matt. xxiii. 27.* and *Luke xi. 44.* as reconciled by *Dr. Pococke* in his *not. misc. cap. v.* quoted also by *Mr. Townson*, p. 97. 4to. edition; whom the reader will do well to consult.

REMARK XXXII.

FROM the peculiar complexion and phraseology of *St. John's gospel* a critical observer may deduce no inconsiderable argument in behalf of the *Christian* revelation.

It is well known from the account of *John* himself, delivered with a modest simplicity that repels every suspicion of partial misrepresentation from the narrative, that he was the disciple, on whom our Lord reposed a greater confidence, and whom he regarded with sentiments of peculiar friendship and affection. When *Jesus* had declared, that one of the apostles then at table
with

with him would be his betrayer to the *Jews*, we are told, that *Simon Peter* beckoned to *John*, who was leaning on *Jesus'* bosom, to ask him of whom he spake*: a question, which implies, no less than *John's* situation at the table, a more intimate familiarity with his master. Besides, our Lord's recommendation of *Mary* to *John's* protection, and the manner of that recommendation, is a further proof, independent of the apostle's own express testimony to the same effect, of mutual esteem and love. And this reciprocal attachment argues of necessity a congenial temper and a similar frame of mind.

Add to this, that *John* was called to be an apostle in an early period of our Lord's ministry: a longer time, therefore, of attendance on the public life of *Jesus*, as well as more frequent opportunities of private observation, would unavoidably operate in producing a more exact resemblance of character between them.

Now what is the natural, and indeed necessary, conclusion from these considerations? Truly, that the *gospel* of this beloved disciple must contain, in all probability, a more true and lively repre-

* See John xiii. 23, 24. xxi. 22.

sentation of the life and conversation of his master, than those written by *evangelists* differently circumstanced in these respects. If so, and *Jesus Christ* be that *word* and *wisdom* of God, which the writings of the *New-Testament* declare him to have been, *St. John's* gospel will be likely to contain more and clearer marks of authenticity,—to wear a complexion eminently characteristic of its original,—and to comprise an intrinsic usefulness and excellence, above the rest.

And such, I am strongly persuaded in my own mind, is the *fact*. This position, however, admits of little reference, but to the private judgment of the unprejudiced and competent examiner. Yet I must be permitted to declare my opinion, that *St. John's* gospel is the least understood of all the *four*: and that a more close and critical perusal of it will gradually disclose its excellencies with increasing illustration, and will continue furnishing additional corroboration and clearness to the argument advanced in this *Remark*. “*TIME*,” says an illustrious ancient, “overthrows the fictions of opinion, and establishes the decisions of Truth and Nature.”

REMARK

REMARK XXXIII.

THE multiplicity of little incidents interspersed through the *gospels*, so consonant to real action and the acknowledged operations of the mind; such an artless mention of circumstances seemingly trivial, but in reality, upon discussion, of the highest moment;—not only remove every suspicion of forgery from illiterate *tax-gatherers* and *fishermen*, but claim the legitimate extraction of integrity and truth. I will endeavour to select a few particulars out of *many*, that seem to me not ill adapted to illustrate and confirm this observation.

1. What can wear a more *natural* appearance in every feature than the following relation? or where shall we find a more faithful description of that mean jealousy and eagerness to depreciate superiour merit, so lamentably observable in the world?

And, when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said: Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?*

* Matt. xiii. 54—58.

I cannot

I cannot forbear quoting on this occasion an epitaph on the poet *Æschylus*, as the tenour of it falls in so pertinently with the subject of this *Remark*.*.

*This tomb proclaims renowned Æschylus,
Far from his native soil, reposing here;
Hard by Sicilian Gela's limpid stream.
Why wilt thou thus, invidious Athens! why
Still persecute thy best and noblest sons?*

2. No study and ingenuity could easily have given us such a lively representation of the suspicion and uneasiness of conscious guilt in the most elaborate picture, as this single stroke of a plain unaffected copier from nature:

At that time, Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants: THIS IS JOHN THE BAPTIST; HE IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD†.

* Αισχυλον ἥδε λεγει ταφῆν λιθῶ ἐνθαδὲ κεισθαι,
Τοι μεγαλ, οικειης τηλ' ἀπο Κερροπινης,
Λευκα Γελας Σικελιοιο παρ' ὑδαλα. τις φθονῶ ἀσίων
Θησειδας αγαθων εγκρίῳ αἰεν ἔχει;

“The Athenians are blamed, says *Eustathius* in II. p. 934.
“as harsh to all; peculiarly addicted to envy, to abuse,
“to banish, to condemn; and especially their best citi-
“zens: witness *Aristides*, *Alcibiades*, *Socrates*, and a mul-
“titude of others.”

† Matt. xiv. 1—3.

The

The deliberate and unprovoked murder of a righteous man, whom yet he loved and respected*, to gratify a malicious wicked woman and his drunken nobles, filled his mind with perpetual alarm. Wherever he went, the phantom still pursued his steps with unrelenting perseverance: no incident so immaterial, no event so extraordinary, with which his imagination did not equally associate the frightful subject of his cruelty. Even the established laws of nature, he thought, might *easily* be superseded for one end at least, the disturbance of *his* repose:—IT IS JOHN THE BAPTIST:—HE IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD.

The copious description of the sublime satirist, noble as it is, does not furnish a more lively idea of the horrors of conscious guilt, than this short ejaculation of the *Jewish tetrarch*†.

3. Numerous particulars, in these histories, devoid of all art and ostentation, seem to indicate *personal appearance* and *ocular testimony*. And this circumstance gives also, as I have intimated before, much confirmation to *Mark's gospel*, in relation to the testimony of the ancients, that in the drawing of it up he was assisted by *St. Peter*.

* Mark vi. 20.

† Juv. xiii. 210—236.

Matthew

Matthew says in general, that the disciples had forgot to take bread with them*: *Mark* tells us, that they had a single loaf†. And whosoever shall be inclined to a minute comparison, which any reader may easily perform, will discover many particulars admirably conducive to the ascertainment of this position‡.

4. When our *evangelist* informs us, that the woman shook together the alabaster box of ointment before she poured it on the head of *Jesus*||, he not only uses the expression of an eye-witness, but of one, who was acquainted with the mixed perfumes there spoken of, and must therefore have written, probably, when such boxes and such ointments were in use§.

5. It was *night* at the time of our Lord's examination before the high priest: and therefore an objection might arise with some to the account given of *Peter's* conduct, who followed at a dis-

* Matt. xvi. 3. † Mark viii. 14.

‡ Matt. xxvii. 55. is a circumstance, which no artful fabricator of a fictitious story, aware of the malice of mankind, would have invented.

|| Ch. xiv. 3.

§ I forbear to transcribe, what I have before endeavoured to confirm by various passages from ancient authors; and accordingly shall refer, for the sake of brevity, to some observations on this text in the *Theological Repository*, and my *Silva Critica*, Part I. mentioned above.

tance,

*tance**, and could not easily be distinguished in the *dark*. But we are informed, that there was a *fire* in the hall of the high-priest, and that *Peter sat and warmed himself* there. Hence it is, that † the *maid-servant* is said to LOOK UPON HIM, before she speaks: plainly intimating, that she was *examining* by the *light* of the *fire*, whether it really was *Peter* or not.

Other strong presumptions, as they strike me, of *ocular testimony* may be produced both from him and the other *evangelists*.

The following account, for example, has every symptom of a *real* transaction circumstantially recorded by an observer of the natural representation of the relator. You see the *action* in a description so truly animated.

For I also, who am a man under authority, have soldiers under me: and I say to this, GO, and he goeth; and to another, COME, and he cometh; and to my servant, DO THIS, and he doeth it.*

To which this also may be properly subjoined:

And there was following him a certain young man with a linen garment thrown about his naked body; and the young men lay hold on him: but he left the garment behind, and fled from them naked.*

* Mark xiv. 54. † Ver. 67. ‡ Mark xiv. 51, 52.

The description is well suited to the case of a person suddenly roused from sleep by the tumult in the street; and of one active, and curious to acquaint himself with the particulars: which are all very probable circumstances, and delineated conformably to such probability in the relation. Had the person mentioned been *old*, or with *all his clothes on*, our attention would not have been particularly excited by any prominent features in the narrative, declaratory of the *time* and *singularity* of the incident.

I shall only add, that, if any of my readers will take the trouble of comparing together the several accounts of the *four evangelists* concerning the separate *denials* of *Peter*, he will discover, if I mistake not, such numerous indications of veracity, as will impress a most agreeable conviction on his mind. To me, at least, they appear highly cogent and satisfactory.

6. This artless relation of¹ *St. John* amounts of itself to an ample confutation of that idle calumny, that the *disciples came by night and stole the body of our Lord* *.

Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen cloaths lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen cloaths, but wrapped together in a place by itself †.

* Matt. xxviii. 13.

† John xxii. 6, 7.

Are these appearances of *composure* and *regularity* at all suitable with the HURRY and TREPIDATION of THIEVES, when an armed guard too is at hand, plundering by NIGHT *?—The historian, we may observe, does not *dwell* upon the circumstance, as if it were specified with a *direct* view of removing some secret difficulty; as a forger would probably have done: but delivers it with all the simplicity of an unsuspecting relator of truth; and thereby leaves it with far more weight of evidence, than if it had been accompanied by a multiplicity of reasons and a laboured explanation. *Pindar* observes, with his usual pregnancy of wisdom, that *three words will be sufficient in a good cause* *.

* With a similar view, and with exquisite dexterity, *Cicero* says of *Milo*, to prove the purity of his purposes:—*domum venit; calceos et vestimenta mutavit, &c.* for the passage is well known to every one at all conversant with ancient literature.

Sedulius comments on this *text* with equal force and vivacity: Hymn. Pasch. iv.

anne beati
Corporis ablator VELOCIUS esse putavit
Solvere contactum, quàm devecitare ligatum,
Cùm MORA sit FURTIS contraria? Cautiùs ergò
Cum dominò potuere magis sua lintea tolli.
Mentita est vox vana sibi.

* Εὐνυμοί εἰς δίχας

Τρία πικὰ δαγκισμ. Nem. vii.

A circumstance significant of authenticity, and of a nature exactly similar to those, which have been produced under this *remark*, occurs in the *third* book of *Thucydides*, towards the conclusion; and will serve to elucidate the scope and pertinency of this mode of reasoning.

A herald came from a small state of *Greece*, demanding a truce for the burial of the dead, that had been slain in an engagement *two* days before. Upon seeing, with much astonishment, a number of slain far beyond his expectation, and enquiring the reason from another herald, who was sent by the opposite party for the same purpose, he learnt, that another detachment of his countrymen had been cut off the day before. Notwithstanding the importance of his errand, (for nothing was more revered in those days than the rites of the *dead*) his mind was so entirely overpowered by the shock of this unexpected and unequalled calamity, as to leave him no leisure for other thoughts. He raised *a loud cry of lamentation*, and went away *without executing the purpose of his message*.

REMARK

REMARK XXXIV.

THE *gospels* hold out a representation of the *manners* of the *common people*, which has it's accuracy ascertained by uniform experience and the general voice of the histories of mankind.

Whether (which is now my own decided opinion) the attachment of the multitude to our Saviour were weakened by the disappointment * of that universal expectation among the *Jews*, that their *Messiah* would erect a *temporal* kingdom; or any other undiscoverable cause wrought the change on the humours of the mob; (for our own times have given many proofs of these capricious quick transitions †, and how great a fire one spark

* They were looking for some great miracle previous to his possession of regal power: compare Matt. xxvi. 53—57. John xii. 17—20.

† The disposition of a populace is, to embrace any *novelty* and to abandon it on the slightest motives, particularly the will of their superiors. Thus the *Londoners* welcomed with shouts the return of *James* the Second, and immediately suffered him to depart with perfect indifference. The veneration of the *Parisians* for their *great king*, was changed at once into contempt and insult. See Quint. Curt. ix. 4. 22. and the commentators there: Dion. Cass. liii. 24. lviii. 11. lxxv. 1. *Seutonius* in many places; *Polybius*,

spark of popular rage can kindle) whatever, I say, the cause might be, the people at large soon manifested so much conformity to the wishes and sentiments of their rulers, as to demand the execution of *him*, whom they had so lately followed through the city with *Hosannas*, and saluted as *the king of Israel*.

The account, which the *Roman* poet has given us of the conduct of the populace to *Sejanus*, the favourite of the emperor *Tiberius*, might serve as a comment on this part of the gospel-history. All they knew was, the emperor's displeasure and the favourite's degradation. But *this* was a sufficient ground for their immediate alienation, and for every species of insult. "If," says my author, "the minister, on the other hand, had contrived to take off his master, this very *Sejanus* would have been, at the moment of his execution, with equal cordiality and as much reason, saluted emperor in his stead by the same populace*."

bias, xi. 27, well says: Πας οχλος υπαρελογισεν υπαρχει, και ης παν ευαγωγος. So *Demosthenes*, p. 229. lin. 21. ed. Latet. *Julian*, p. 455. *Phil. J.* ii. 350. 17. These sudden turns are influenced also by general *profligacy* of manners and monstrous *ingratitude*, too incident to the vulgar from the depravity of governments, inattentive to the virtuous discipline of their subjects.

* *Juv. Sat.* x. 61.

But

But, if the mistaken notion of the *Jews* respecting the nature of the *Messiah's* kingdom, really operated in producing this sudden change in the behaviour of the populace, it had scarcely produced such a *general* effect as might have been presumed from the disappointment of an expectation so agreeable, so universal, and so deeply rooted: which makes the fickleness and depravity of the vulgar still more flagrant, or, in other words, more exactly correspondent to history and experience. The seizure of *Jesus* by night strongly countenances this opinion, and cannot otherwise be explained *. When the multitude solicit the release of *Barabbas* and the execution of *Jesus*, they do not appear to express their free unbiassed opinion, but to have listened to the instigations of the *chief priests and elders* †.

Howsoever this may be determined by the reader, one circumstance attending the apprehension of *Jesus* appears to me very material, and from which I would willingly draw a most important inference; and in this I think myself countenanced by the spirit of the narrative, and the total absence, to all appearance, of such a remote intention in the mere letter of it. Let the reader decide impartially upon the reasonableness of my conclusion.

* See Luke xxii. 1—7.

† Matt. xxvii. 20.

Jesus said unto them: Whom seek ye? They answered him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them: I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, THEY WENT BACKWARD, AND FELL TO THE GROUND.*

Now, whether we suppose the *Jewish* officers to have acted in this manner of their own accord, or to have used this caution at the instance of *Judas*, their conduct is an undeniable evidence of their *fear*; which, as far as I can discover, could arise from no other cause than a conviction of our Lord's MIRACULOUS POWER. Let any man assign a better reason, if he can. For my part, I shall continue to consider this transaction, 'till I can see a more probable solution of it upon other principles, as a most pleasing incidental attestation to the MIRACLES of JESUS.

In this case, as in that of the expulsion of the *traders* from the temple, an ascititious circumstance, which explains and reconciles a seeming difficulty of a rational historian, ought in all reason to be regarded as bordering on truth, unless self-contradictory, or repugnant to the suggestions of common-sense.

I must observe still further upon the subject of

* John xviii. 4—7.

This remark, that the behaviour of the populace of *Jerusalem*, in whatever point of view it may be contemplated, and upon whatever principles it may be explained, exhibits another characteristic feature in the manners of mankind at large: I mean that abominable *selfishness*, and insensibility to the concerns of others, which is the foulest stain that can sully the human character, and of all possible vices the most incompatible with the essence of *Christianity*, a system of universal and unbounded love. Let me be permitted to relate a little piece of history to this purpose*.

“ Whilst *Demosthenes* was pleading the cause
“ of a person accused of a capital offence, he
“ saw the audience in a state of confusion, and
“ totally inattentive to the business, which was be-
“ fore them. Upon this, he earnestly entreated
“ their attention for a few minutes, and began to
“ relate,” how a certain young man hired an ass
to carry his clothes and provisions to *Megara*, accompanied by a driver, who was to take care of the animal and bring him back. The day proved extremely hot; and, as there was no tree, nor any kind of shelter near, to protect him from the vehemence of the sun’s rays, he prepared to lay himself down under the shadow of the ass. This the ser-

* See *Suidas* in *Ono oxia*.

want of the owner would not allow, maintaining, that he had hired the *ass* only, and not his *shadow*. Hereupon a most violent altercation arose between them. “ When our orator had proceeded thus far in his story, he perceived the assembly to be grown attentive ; highly delighted with the tale, and impatient to hear the conclusion of it. Instead of proceeding in his relation, the orator reproved them with great severity for their childish curiosity and eagerness about the *shadow of an ass*, and their scandalous unconcern for the *life of an innocent person*, whom he was defending.”

Upon the whole, we may challenge any man to produce an instance of a fictitious narrative, which contains such a multitude of incidents, of more or less magnitude, so conformable throughout to the *exemplar of human life and manners**, as are supplied by the short historical writings of the *New Testament*.

* ——— *exemplar vitæ morumque*. Hor.

REMARK

REMARK XXXV.

It is a good symptom of authenticity in any person pretending to a *prophetic character*, if he lays down the circumstances, under which his *prophecies* will receive their completion, with *particularity* and *precision*. The correspondence of the *gospels* to this test is wonderfully striking and satisfactory.

Our Lord foretels not only the progress of the gospel, but the future persecution of his disciples; and his own death, with an enumeration of *many specific circumstances**—that he should be *betrayed* by one of his twelve *apostles*†—that *particular insults* and ill-usage would attend his apprehension—that he should be *crucified*—that he should *rise again* from the grave—and that, on the *third day* after his interment.—He foretels also the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the desertion of his apostles—that *James*, and *John*, and *Peter*, would suffer *martyrdom* for their adherence to his religion:—that *John* would live to the destruction

* Matt. xi. 2. xiv. 15:

† Βελομεν—ἡμᾶς παιδεύσαι τὴν προγνωσιν αὐτῆς, λέγει· Ἀμην, ἀμην, λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅτι εἰς ἐξ ὑμῶν παραδώσει με. Apost. Const. 7. 45.

of

of *Jerusalem*;—this *destruction* * itself, to be accomplished *before* the generation then existing should be removed from the earth,—and by the *Romans*; with a discriminate detail of many other very remarkable *peculiarities*, whose completion is minutely recorded by *Josephus*.

It is this precision, which in *Jerome's* opinion†, who indeed only follows *Josephus*‡, gives *Daniel* a manifest superiority over the *other* prophets of the *Old Testament*. *Aristotle* remarks with his

* The aspect of this *prophecy* on the genuineness of the *Christian* religion is of the very first importance, and wonderfully satisfactory: but it has been well displayed by a variety of writers, and of late by *Mr. Walker* of *Nottingham*, in his *sermons*. The reader will find also, if he thinks proper to consult them, some remarks on the subject in my notes on c. xxiv. of *St. Matthew*.—On this topic of our *Lord's prophetic* power, consult also *Euseb. præp. Evang. i. 3.*

† *Illud in præfatione commoneo, nullum prophetarum tam APERTE dixisse de Christo. Non enim solum scribit eum esse venturum, sed etiam QUO TEMPORE venturus sit docet; et reges PER ORDINEM digerit, et ANNOS enumerat, ac manifestissima signa prænunciat. Proæm. in lib. comm. Dan.*

‡ Ου τα μελλοντα μονον προφητευων διελελει, καθαπερ και οι αλλοι προφηται, αλλα και ΚΑΙΡΟΝ ΩΡΙΖΕΝ. Ant. x. 11. 7.

Και γαρ ταυτο ανθρωπος ιδιον και κ κοινον ποιει· οι μεν γαρ αλλοι αλαζ. νες, οταν τι ψευδωνται, αοριστα και ασαφη πειρωνται λεγειν, φοβεμενοι τον ελεγχον· κτλ. *Aeschines cont. Ctes.*

usual

usual accuracy and penetration*, that “*pretended*
 “ *prophets* express themselves in *general* language.
 “ In a game at odd and even,” he observes, “ a
 “ man may say, whether the number be odd or
 “ even, much sooner than *what* it is: and that
 “ such a thing *will* happen, than *when*. There-
 “ fore our oracle-mongers never define *when*.”

Nor must an acute *remark* of *Cicero*’s to this
 purpose be omitted†. “ If this be foretold, *who*
 “ is the *PERSON* meant? and *what* is the *TIME*?
 “ The writer has conducted himself so dextrously,
 “ that *any* event whatsoever will suit his *pro-*
 “ *phesy*, since there is NO SPECIFICATION OF
 “ MEN AND TIMES.”

Horace ridicules with great humour the solemn
 and pompous nothingness of the *Heathen* oracles‡:
 “ Son

* Rhet. iii. 4. 1. Ed. Oxon.

† Hoc si est in libris, in QUEM HOMINEM, et in QUOD TEM-
 PUS est? Callidè enim, qui illa composuit, perfecit, ut, quod-
 cunque accidisset, prædictum videretur, HOMINUM ET TEM-
 PORUM DEFINITIONE SUBLATA: De Div. ii. 24.

Ποιῶ δ’ αν μοχθηροτερῶ τροπῶ αποδειξεως ταυτε γενοιτο;
 το γαρ αποβαινειν τινα κατὰ την ενεργειαν ὧν προλεγουσιν οἱ μαρτυρες,
 ἢ τε μαντικην επιστημην ειναι σημειον αν ειη, αλλα τε τυχικως συμ-
 ππτειν ταις προχγορευσεσι συμφωνησ τας εκβασεις. Diogenia-
 nus apud Euseb. præp. evang. iv. 3.

‡ Sat ii. 5. 59.

O! Laertiade, quicquid dicam, aut erit aut non;
 Divinare etenim magnus mihi donat Apollo.

To

O Son of Laertes ! what I now foretel
 " Will either come to pass, or IT WILL NOT:
 " For Phoebus' self inspires my oracles."

My argument upon this point, in behalf of the *gospels* and, the prophetic character of our Saviour, would be sensibly affected, if the liberal concession of Bishop HURD to *Pagan divination* in his *fourth Sermon on Prophecy* were at all admissible. But to call the predictions there specified, *authentic, important, and circumstantial*, betrays, I think, such a want of judgement and

To the same purpose also a ludicrous *epigram* of *Lucilius* in the *Anthologia*, from which *Ausonius* has taken his 93d *epigram*:

To ask the Libyan God three champions came,
 If each should conquer in the Olympic game:
 To whom the God with due solemnity:
 " A CERTAIN VICTORY awaits all three,
 " If thou take care that none outstrip thy FEET;
 " None thee in WRESTLING, thee in BOXING beat."

Hence, I think, Mr. Markland proposes at Stat. Silv. v. i. 110. an injudicious alteration of the *prophecy* of *Nereus* in *Horace* from a general to a specific declaration:

Post CERTAS hyemes uret Achaicus
 Ignis Iliacas domos.

The most remarkable prediction of the heathen writers appears to me that of *Homer*, Il. γ. 307.

Νυν δὲ δὴ Αἰνείας βῆν Τρωϊσσὶ ἀναΐει,
 Καὶ παῖδες παίδων, τοὶ καὶ μετόπισθε γυνῶνται.

good

good sense, I had almost said, so much *credulity*, as might have altogether ruined with some the credit of a less accomplished writer. I, however, will not be disgusted with a few blemishes amidst so much excellence; and ~~shall~~ therefore neither repeat nor enlarge what I have said on this subject in another place*.

The very sagacious and learned *Spencer*, in his Treatise on *the Vanity of Vulgar Prophecies*, disparages, for the same reasons, which had occurred to myself, that *Prophecy of Seneca*. As the passage is short I will stay to produce it here.

“ That famous speech of *Seneca* the tragoedian,

“ ————— venient annis

“ *Sæcula* seris, quibus *Oceanus*

“ *Vincula rerum* laxet, et ingens

“ *Pateat tellus*, *Tithysque* novos

“ *Detegat orbes*, nec sit *terris*

“ *Ultima Thule*:

“ hath been concluded *the voice of God*, a prophetic instinct referring to the discovery of
 “ *America* in these latter ages: which was indeed
 “ but *the voice of a man*; a rational conjecture;
 “ proceeding upon a probable persuasion, that

* See my Commentary on *St. Matthew*, C. xxiv. V. 34.

“ so great a part of the globe of the earth was
 “ not all sea, and so would in time be found.”

REMARK XXXVI.

SUCH a circumstance as the following —

Joseph of Arimathea went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled, if he were already dead:*

—such a circumstance, I say, as this, no historian of any tolerable sagacity would have inserted, who was not conscious of it's truth and of an integrity totally devoid of all wish and intention to deceive. A dextrous impostor (and no inconsiderable dexterity a forger of the gospels *must* certainly have possessed) would immediately have discerned, that this declaration of *Pilate's wonder* at the *speedy* dissolution of our Lord must encourage a suspicion of some *contrivance* and *deception* in the matter; and countenance an insinuation that one, who had never been *dead*, as was probable, might appear *again*, without any *miracle*, to his disciples. “ Besides,” (would an impostor be likely to reason with himself) “ why should

* Mark xv. 43, 44.

“ *Jesus* expire *before* the *two malefactors* who
“ were crucified with him?”

And yet such satisfactory reasons may be assigned for this effect, as reflect, independent of all other corroboration, the highest probability on the narrative.

Not to insist on an opinion, which receives some countenance from scripture*, that *Jesus* was actually fastened to the cross *before* the robbers; his *earlier* dissolution is sufficiently accounted for from the low state of mind and body, in which his extreme agony in the garden, and, doubtless, the frequent anticipation of his sufferings on other occasions, previous to that extraordinary conflict, *must* have left him. It is unnecessary to look out for any *other* reason: or we might infer, upon probable grounds, an *imbecillity* of *body* and a *delicacy* of *constitution*, promoted, or produced, by a life of meditation and abstinence, of hardship and fatigue†. The solutions, which some writers‡ have given of this difficulty, are dishonourable to our Lord, detrimental to the evidences of *Christianity*,

* See Matt. xxvii. 38.

† See Matt. viii. 20. John viii. 57.

‡ *Origen*, *Eusebius* (dem. ev. p. 108) and some moderns, from Matt. xxvii. 50, on which place see my *Commentary*, and *Silva Critica*, Part iv.

without foundation in learning, reason, or scripture; and shocking to common-sense.

REMARK XXXVII.

THE backwardness of the disciples in believing the resurrection of their master, and the very scrupulous incredulity and inquisitiveness of *Thomas* in particular, are not only perfectly consistent with *their* temper and turn of mind, as set forth in other parts of these histories, and on that account probable from *uniformity*; but derive a further appearance of veracity to the historian in question, if we consider that a forger of the *gospels* would have apprehended some detriment to his grand object, the *resurrection* of *Jesus*, from an indisposition and unwillingness in those, who knew him best, to acknowledge their Lord again. Such frankness and simplicity of narrative are striking presumptions of the *reality* of this capital event, which is the corner-stone of *Christianity*; and indirectly prove the entire conviction of the apostles themselves, that our Lord had actually *expired* on the cross. All the circumstances of this part of the gospel-history cannot fail to make a very considerable impression on every reader of impartiality and discernment. There is a certain
limit

limit to which an impostor, aided by ingenuity and experience, may be allowed to proceed with little danger of detection; but an undeviating consistency with itself, in striking conjunctures, in which the arts of sophistry would have often dictated another conduct; and a strict conformity to the maxims of *experience*, through a *circumstantial history* of a great *variety* of *extraordinary transactions*, is, I think, beyond his ability, and seems only attainable by the honest undesigning votary of TRUTH*.

REMARK XXXVIII.

THERE occurs in the *gospel* of *St. Luke* by far the noblest specimen of what, by the courtesy of *criticism*, I would call *the sublimity of silence*†, that human genius has been able to produce. Certainly nothing but an actual report from an *eye-witness* could have suggested such a grand and pathetic image; an image, that humbles the highest flights of poetical inspiration.

* Abfuit ergò ab his fingendi voluntas et astutia, quoniam rudes fuerunt. Aut quis possit indoctus apta inter se et cohærentia fingere, cum philosophorum doctissimi *Plato*, et *Aristoteles*, et *Epicurus*, et *Zeno*, ipsi sibi repugnantia et contraria dixerint? Hæc est enim mendaciorm natura, ut cohærere non possint. *Lactant. v. 3.*

† Σιωπή μέγα και παύσις ὑψηλοτερον λογι. *Longin. de sub. sect. 9.*

*And all the people, that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned *.*

Their sensations were too big for utterance!

The *sullen silence* of *Ajax* in *Homer* is well known, and deservedly extolled by *Longinus*. I will quote *Virgil's* admirable imitation of it, in *Mr. Pitt's* translation, for the entertainment of the reader: which, however, falls very short of the majesty of the original.

“ Nought to these tender words the fair replies,
 “ But fixt on earth her unrelenting eyes ;
 “ The chief still weeping, with a sullen mien,
 “ In steadfast silence, frown'd th' obdurate queen.
 “ Fixt as a rock amidst the roaring main,
 “ She hears him sigh, implore, and plead in vain.
 “ Then, where the woods their thickest shades display,
 “ From his detested sight she shoots away.”

Nor will I let go the opportunity of giving a little variety to this work by producing a delightful passage of the same kind from the father of poetry, not noticed by the critics †.

* Ch. xxiii. v. 48.

† Hom. Od. Λ. 537.

Ως εφαμην· ψυχη δε ποδωκε· Αιακίδαο
 Φοίλα, μακρα βίωσα, καί' ασφοδιλον λειμωνα,
 Γηθοσυνη, ὃ ὡς υἱον εφην ἀριδείκλον εἶναι.

Achilles,

Achilles, after some other conversation with *Ulysses* in the *shades*, inquires into the conduct of his son. He received such an account of his bravery and exploits, as could not fail to be highly acceptable to such a father. The effect of this intelligence on *Achilles* is thus nobly imagined by the poet:

“ I spake: Achilles straight, without reply,
 “ Stalkt o’er the yellow mead of Asphodel
 “ With stride majestic; flush’d with joy to hear
 “ Such glorious feats of his intrepid son,”

REMARK XXXIX.

THE *miracle* of the conversion of *water* into *wine* is related with every symptom of veracity. The easiness of the narrative, and the probability of the several circumstances accompanying the miracle, must be either the result of truth and actual observation, or the achievement of the most ingenious and subtle impostor, that ever exerted his skill for the deception of mankind. If the latter alternative be the more reasonable supposition, it behoves our adversaries to give some account of this sagacious plagiarist; some little insight into his character—*who* he was—*when* and *where* he existed. Until a few particulars of

this kind can be made out, they must indulge the friends of revelation in their partiality for *the cloud of witnesses*, that encompass them; and in their respect for those innumerable marks of internal probability, discoverable in the scriptures of their religion. Should the *deist* call this attachment to their faith *puerile*, and *irrational*, unworthy of a *philosophical* turn of mind; though decency will not suffer us to oppose the names of many now alive to this groundless and conceited imputation, yet surely, without alledging instances from the *clerical* profession, we may be allowed to cite the names of BACON, MILTON, BOYLE, NEWTON, LOCKE, and HARTLEY. In competition with these heroes of our species, if the dispute must be decided by the preponderancy of *genius* and *accomplishments*, such men as *Hume* * and *Gibbon* are as
the

* I have often been shocked and mortified at the commendations, which Mr. *Hume* has received from respectable writers, on account of his history. Of his other qualities as a historian I say nothing: my present concern is with his stile. In a select company of friends I once asserted, that he was a WRETCHED WRITER. The opinion was not admitted, and his relation of the massacre in *Ireland* was mentioned as a fine specimen of composition. It was immediately produced, and after a slight dissection given up as truly pitiful. This history, and especially Mr. *Gibbon's*, shews the *author* more than the *subject*; and, instead
of

the small dust of the balance against the *mountains*;—
as the malignant glimmerings of a taper to the ef-
fulgence of a mid-day sun.

These self-important gentlemen know nothing
in reality of the *evidences of revelation*. It is as-
serted by Dr. *Johnson* in Mr. *Boswell's* Memoirs
of him, that *Hume* owned to a clergyman in the
bishopric of Durham, that he had never read the
New Testament in a dispassionate and inquisitive
manner. And “upon this occasion, I cannot
“ help calling to mind what once past between
“ the renowned Sir *Isaac Newton* and the famous
“ Dr. *Halley*. This latter throwing out some in-
“ decent reflexions upon *Christianity*, Sir *Isaac*
“ stopt him short, and spoke to him in these or the
“ like words: Dr. *Halley*, I am always glad to
“ hear you, when you speak about *astronomy*, or
“ other parts of *mathematics*; because that is a
“ subject you have studied, and well understand:
“ but you should not talk of *Christianity*, for you
“ have not studied it. I have; and know you
“ know nothing of the matter*.”

of the perspicuity, simplicity, and purity of *narrative*, you
are presented with all the pomp of oratorical tumour and
laborious ostentation; with every species of vicious affec-
tation and ridiculous verbosity, absolutely insupportable
to men of taste, and to such as have been schooled in the
natural language and pure composition of ancient history.

* *Emlyn's Life*, p. 55.

To return to the subject of this *Remark* *. The absence of all contrivance and collusion could not be more happily implied, than by the manner in which the discovery is signified to the company. The servants alone were privy to the process of the miracle; and were desired by *Jesus* to carry some of the new wine to *the governor of the feast*. According to the usual practice on those occasions, mentioned too by the governor, the wine, which they had been drinking last, was not remarkable for its excellence. His attention was immediately excited by this fresh supply, and he gives his attestation to the miracle in so natural and easy a way, that I cannot but esteem it beyond the reach of artifice and the ingenuity of imposture. He called the bridegroom, and said: *Every man at the beginning setteth forth good wine, and, when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now.*

This incidental testimony carries with it all the air of authenticity, which could possibly be derived from the unaffected mention of such a circumstance.

I cannot dismiss the *miracle* before us, without calling upon the reader to contemplate the compliant and amiable character of our Lord and the religion which he preached. *Christianity*, he will observe,

* John ii. 1—12.

does

does not disdain to indulge the innocent enjoyments and temperate recreations of humanity. We have here inculcated nothing of puritanical sourness, nothing of the rigorous austerities of *Stoicism*. It enjoins no *fastings*, no painful *mortifications* of the flesh. Its spirit is in unison with the unadulterated affections of our constitution. The author of *nature* and the giver of *grace* is one and the same, God unchangeable and everlasting.

REMAKK XL.

THE expulsion of *the buyers and sellers* from the temple is such an extraordinary transaction in itself, and so very different from the customary conduct of our Saviour, that an impostor of any penetration and address (and surely prejudice itself will not deny a forger of the gospels *some* portion of these qualities) would have thought it madness to leave *such* an account, unaccompanied by any allegations to vindicate the behaviour of *Jesus*, and any reasons for the implicit deference of the *traders* to his authority. No; we have undoubtedly the authentic narrative of a historian, conscious that he was employed upon the truth, and no farther solicitous than to record it; con-
fiding

finding in the general tenour of the history at large for consistency and corroboration.

A consciousness in the traders of the indecency and profanation of their proceedings, in prostituting *the courts of the Lord's house* to the accommodation of their worldly purposes in so degrading a manner, would not, I think, in itself account for this ready acquiescence in our Lord's conduct. And yet daily experience is sufficient to certify the advantage, which this principle of nature can give the weak over the strong. But, if we connect with this an idea of his *miraculous* power, (without which indeed the cooperating cause, that is, the great multitude of applauding spectators, who accompanied him, cannot easily be accounted for) all difficulties will be removed; a beautiful coherence is discovered, and the attestation of a singular event, will accede to the *divine legation*, as well as the *prophetic* character *, of our Saviour. The whole transaction appears to me most mysterious and perfectly unaccountable in any other view; but plain, and reasonable, and consistent, and satisfactory in this.

* See BISHOP HURD's most excellent Discourse on this subject in his Sermons.

Now

Now the unanimity of *all* the *Evangelists* in recording this piece of history is a sufficient proof of *their* opinion of it's importance; and this constitutes a presumption of the justness of the preceding ideas respecting it, which certainly give it this importance.

I discover another mark of simplicity and truth, another presumption against all collusive management, in the different relations, which the *Evangelists* have left of this transaction; and of such force, as, I flatter myself, cannot be resisted.

When our Saviour declares in the narratives of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*: *My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it A DEN OF THIEVES**; an allusion is not intended to a nest of robbers indiscriminately, of *any* description, but is particular and precise. A comparison is not instituted between the *traders* and a band of robbers; but between a *den* of robbers and the *Court of the Temple*. By a *den* is here meant the *cavity of a rock, a subterraneous habitation*, or some such place, where robbers were accustomed to secrete the CATTLE, which they had stolen. I cannot better illustrate my meaning and the pertinency of the appellation, than by producing a passage from *Virgil*, immediately to the purpose,

* Matt. xxi. 13. Mark xi. 17. Luke xix. 46.

He drove them all out of the temple, and the SHEEP and the OXEN.*

Here is the key to this *den of thieves*, dropped indeed very incidentally, as it should seem, and without design: for it is extremely observable, that our Saviour's charge in this Evangelist is not — *Make not my father's house A DEN OF THIEVES* — but — *Make not my father's house A HOUSE OF MERCHANDIZE*. — So then those historians, who employ the peculiar expression under contemplation, leave it wholly unintelligible in its *proper* acceptation; and that historian, on the other hand, who had actually given the *explanation*, does not use the *phrase*. Now I defy any man to imagine a more decisive and unequivocal proof of persons, writing from the simplicity of their hearts, unaccompanied by the slightest symptom of artificial contrivance and collusion, — without the least appearance of any solicitude beyond a plain narration of the truth, — than what a comparison of our *Evangelists* exhibits in this instance. The conclusion is obvious: and the evidence is almost irresistible†.

The reader will discover the propriety of the same inference in favour of the freedom of the

* C. ii. v. 15.

† Sine dubio in omni re vincit imitationem veritas: Cicero de orat. iii. 57.

Evangelists from all partial purposes, if he will take the trouble of comparing Matt. xxvi. 68. with ~~Matt~~ *Mark* xiv. 65. and *Luke* xxii. 64. He will observe that the *first* writer ~~uses~~ the expression, PROPHECY *unto us*—without mentioning what ~~the~~ other *two* have inserted, and what is necessary to explain the phrase; namely, that the *face* of *Christ* was covered. And this confirms also another remark, which I have had occasion to make before; How natural it is for those, fully acquainted with a circumstance, to overlook particulars as if of no importance, but which are in reality essential to convey a proper insight into the transaction to one not already acquainted with it.

To this purpose also is *John* ii. 19. with Matt. xxvi. 61. The particular there specified has no appearance in the former *Evangelist*, and no previous mention in the latter. There cannot be, in my opinion, more probable indications of honest and disinterested purpose.

REMARK XLI.

Is a lover of the gospel should reflect on the cowardly disposition of the *Apostles*, of which they gave such unequivocal proof by forsaking their master in his last extremity, and consulting only their
their

their own preservation : and should observe, on the other hand, their *forwardness* and *intrepidity* within a *few days after* ; it is not improbable, that some emotions of embarrassment and mistrust may arise from a transition apparently too sudden to be conformable to truth and nature upon any assignable operations of the human mind.—The *Apostles* were indeed destitute of all the customary incentives to great and hazardous undertakings : ineloquent, unexercised in public life, without friends, without influence*. How then is this extraordinary conduct to be explained? I reply : a PERSUASION OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST, upon the evidence of their SENSES, was an adequate cause for so great an alteration of conduct and such intrepidity of temper : and furnishes a complete solution of the problem. When I contemplate every circumstance of their situation, I feel convinced, that no ingenuity can devise another countervailing principle equal to such effects. To take refuge in *supernatural* influence, when so reasonable and satisfactory a cause can be assigned of sufficient efficacy, is both unphilosophical and injurious to *Christianity*. THIS, I maintain, was that ADVOCATE, who would defend these uneloquent and unlearned

* See Arist. Rhet. i. 22.

Galileans with such strength of argument, such energy of conviction, before *rulers, and kings, and councils**:—THIS was that *mouth and wisdom*, which all the power, and policy, and malice of their *adversaries* would be unable to gainsay and resist†. Observe the ground upon which *Peter* and *John* build their determined resolution to preach the gospel in spite of every impediment. *We cannot, say they, but speak the things, which we have SEEN and HEARD*‡.

Upon this plain and obvious principle, that promise in *John* xiv. 26. admits a most satisfactory explanation. *But the holy spirit, that advocate, which the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things; and will remind you of all that I said unto you:* that is, (if I have been able to acquire any insight into the phraseology of the scriptures) “That extraordinary energy of the
“ *holy spirit* of God§, *my* resurrection from the
“ *grave*, which is to be the subject of your preach-
“ *ing*, will be, from your certain conviction of

* Mark xiii. 9.

† Luke xxi. 15.

My learned friend *Dr. Edwards*, of *Cambridge*, has, in my opinion, entirely misconceived this point in his sermon before the *University*, on *the Predictions of the Apostles concerning the End of the World*, page 7.

‡ Acts. iv. 20.

§ Rom. i. 4.

“ it,

“ it, your defence and encouragement, and will
 “ shew you the importance of my *death*; a fact,
 “ of which I, for this reason, so repeatedly fore-
 “ warned you*, and which ye were so backward
 “ to apprehend.” Compare also *John* ii. 22.
 xii. 16. as strongly illustrative of these ideas.

The foregoing *remarks* will appear to the competent and dispassionate examiner, if I mistake not, of considerable moment, and calculated to remove much difficulty from the *scriptures*; for we cannot discover from the subsequent conduct of the *apostles*, as delivered in the *second* history by *St. Luke*, that they spoke or reasoned with *more sagacity* after the death of *Christ* than before, or in a manner at all superior to that of common men. The single *fact* alone of their master's *resurrection* inspired them at once with *argument* and *fortitude*. What they had *seen*, they taught. It was not *they*, who *spoke*; but this miracle of the *holy spirit of their father*, which *spoke in them*†.

And this constitutes, we know, the ESSENTIAL DISTINCTION between the testimony of the *apostles*, and the case of those, who have laid down their lives for the truth in *other* instances,

* *Matt.* xvi. 21. xx. 18. *John* ii. 19.

† *Matt.* x. 19, 20.

and in the succeeding ages of *Christianity*. On one side, martyrdom was the result of a particular persuasion, according to the different sentiments of the individual, derived from the written records of the gospel, respecting transactions unknown to him through any other medium; liable, therefore, to endless diversity, and consequently to endless *error* and *misconception*. On the other side, martyrdom attended a conviction of what had been HEARD and SEEN, and HANDLED *of the word of life**: in which case there was, of course, NO POSSIBILITY of *misapprehension* and *mistake*. We have, in one instance, if I may be allowed this technical illustration of my meaning, the exemplification of an *axiom*: in the other, no more than a *theoretical* demonstration of *sincerity*†.

* 1 John i. 1.

† I would recommend to the reader some judicious reasonings of *Eusebius*, Dem. evang. iii. 6. p. 137. et seq. which are rather too copious for insertion in this place, at a time when publications of this nature are so precarious in their issue and so certain and exorbitant in their cost. He may consult also to great advantage *Origen* against *Celsus*, lib. ii. p. 65. ed. Cant. 1658.

REMARK

REMARK XLII.

THE *miracles* both of the *Old* and *New Testament*, if they imply nothing absurd and contradictory in themselves, nothing inconsistent with our most approved conceptions of the Supreme Being and the wisdom of the divine administration; the *miracles*, I say, of revelation, in these circumstances, proclaim their own *authenticity*, upon this plain principle;—that NO MAN, conversant only with the occurrences of common life, could have *originally** entertained notions so unauthorised by experience, and utterly incapable of admission into the mind, without the interference of some extraneous impression, without the existence of the *reality*. Nay, we may express this proposition in still stronger terms:—The very SINGULARITY of the subject is, in this,

* Αλογοι γαρ απο των ονοματων τα οντα ηγνωσθαι βλαπται, και αδυνατοι· τα μιν γαρ ονοματα φυσικα ποροειρηματα εστι, τα δε οντα, η ποροειρηματα, αλλα βλαπται. *Hippocrates* περι τεχνης.

Nunquàm corpus *μπότα*, aut *veritatem* imago præcedit :

Tertul. Apol. 47.

Εμοι δε δεκει γινωσθαι παντα τα λεγομενα. Ει γαρ ονομα μουθ εγινοντο, λογος δε (l. δη) περι αυτων εδης υπηρξεν· αλλα προτιρον τα εργα, αυτ' αυτας ο λογος ο περι αυτων. *Palæphatus* init. which is exactly correspondent to my own ideas.

and all such cases, a HIGH PRESUMPTION of the TRUTH of the transaction*.

Herodotus informs us†, that “*Necho*, king of “*Ægypt*, sent some *Phoenicians* on a naval expedition with orders to sail through the pillars of “*Hercules* into the *Northern* sea, and so return “to *Ægypt*. The *Phoenicians* accordingly set sail “from the *Red Sea* towards the *South*. In autumn they went on shore, sowed their seed, “waited for the return of harvest, and then proceeded on their voyage. Thus they went on “for two successive years: and on the third year “doubled the pillars of *Hercules*, and came to “*Ægypt*. They brought back a strange account, “perfectly INCREDIBLE TO ME; another may “believe it, if he pleases; that, when they sailed “round *Libya*, THEY HAD THE SUN ON THEIR “RIGHT HAND‡.” The same honest author, sect.

25.

* To the same purpose *Aristotle*: *Rhet.* ii. 19. 2 fin. ΑΛΛΟ, εκ των δοκουντων μιν γιγνησθαι, απιστων δε· οτι εκ αν ιδεξαν, ου μη ην.

† L. iv. sect. 42. Which I suppose is the earliest account upon record of the doubling of the *Cape of Good Hope*, about six hundred years before the *Christian æra*.

‡ A similar assertion proves the account of *Nearchus* in *Arrian* to be true, *hist. Ind.* sect. 25. ed. Gronov. “As “they sailed by the land of the *Indians*, *Nearchus* says that “the

“ 25. will not believe “ that *men with goat's-feet*
 “ *inhabit the northern extremities of Europe*; and
 “ *that others near them sleep for six months.*”—The
 latter fictions arose from men in those high lati-
 tudes having been seen in *beasts-skins*, and so
 compared to *satyrs*; and from the actual expe-
 rience in travellers of the *length of the day* in
summer.

It is evident to a demonstration, that these
Phoenicians did actually perform this expedition;
 that they past the *tropic of cancer*, and possibly
 the *line* and the *southern tropic*. But such a
 strange idea of going *beyond the sun*, which, we
 see, gained no credit with our grave historian;
 such an idea, I say, as this could not possibly be
 a mere fiction of the sailors, an *effect* without a
*cause**;—it could originate in no other source but
actual experiment and *ocular observation*.

Let us illustrate these important positions by an
 example or two. I have but little doubt in my
 own mind concerning the truth of the following

“ the *shadows* were different; but, when they had ad-
 “ vanced considerably to the *south*, the *shadows* also were
 “ turned to the *south*:” and other facts, all demonstrating,
 that he had actually been between the tropics.

* Λογὸς γὰρ ἔργου σκίνη, κατὰ Δημοκρίτου: for *words* are the
shadow of actions, says *Democritus*. Plutarch.

remarkable event*. It is impressed with strong characters of authenticity, and is easily reconciled to credibility and redeemed from extravagance by one or two very reasonable *postulata*.

“ Two friends, *Arcadians*, were travelling together ; and, when they arrived at *Megara*, one took up his lodgings at an inn, the other with a friend. In the night, the one, who lodged with his friend, fancied that he at the inn entertained him to come to his assistance, as the inn-keeper was preparing to murder him. Immediately he rose up from sleep in a fright ; but, on recollection, thinking the vision unworthy of notice, he laid himself down again. His friend seemed in a second appearance to beg him not to leave his death unrevenged, as he had foreborn to assist him whilst alive : adding, that he had been murdered, thrown into a cart by the inn-keeper, and covered with dung : he wisht him therefore to watch the cart as it went out of the gate in the morning. He went accordingly, and askt the driver what he had got in his cart ; who ran away terrified at the question. The body was found at the bottom, and the inn-keeper capitally punished.”

The fact I judge to have been as follows : The survivor, either from the bad polity of the coun-

* *Cicero* de divin. i. 27. and taken from him by *Valerius Maximus*, i. 7. fin.

try, the character or look of the inn-keeper, or some other unknown appearances productive of suspicion, was apprehensive for the safety of his friend at the inn. Full of these apprehensions, he went to sleep, and dreamt, as was natural, that his companion was murdered. On going to the inn in the morning; and, meeting with some unsatisfactory excuse, his suspicion led him to have the cart examined, and thus the murder was detected.—The additional circumstances are probably adventitious to the true relation, in consequence of passing through various hands, and a prevalent disposition in mankind to enlarge and aggravate remarkable occurrences.

Of this kind is that remarkable *phænomenon*, related by *three* evangelists, the *transfiguration* of *Jesus* upon the Mount: which the *deist*, perhaps, like the *prudent* historian, will not choose to credit; though, like him also, he may believe a multitude of other strange things, against *all* reason and probability. As philosophy and experience have vindicated the character of the *Phœnician* sailors against the insinuations of their journalist; so we are convinced, that sound reason and probable deduction will bear us out in our belief of the *miracles* of scripture against the objections of our ablest and most insidious opponents.

The general pretension of antiquity to *miracles* and the unanimous persuasion of their *reality* in all ages and amongst all nations, prove decidedly, in my opinion, *some* miracles to be *true*. Let then the *deist* point out those from the great mass on record, which can establish so fair a claim to the character of authenticity, as those connected with the *Jewish* and *Christian* revelations.

The present existing condition of *Judaism*, *Christianity*, and *Mahometanism*, (which is founded on the *two* former revelations and proceeds on a supposition of their authenticity, or it would never have gained converts, sensual as it is) appears to me a demonstration of *miracles* exhibited at some former period, and not otherwise to be accounted for from any known principles of human action. *Large bodies* of men neither originally accept, nor long retain, a system of religious institutions, which restrains the unruliness of passion and carnal indulgences, accompanied also by a multiplicity of temporal disabilities and embarrassments, without some miraculous attestation to the character of the founder*. History is uniform in

* *Sedulius*, pasch. carm. i. a poet of much elegance :

INDICIO EST ANTIQUA FIDES, ET CANA PRIORUM

TESTIS ORIGO PATRUM; nullisque abolenda per ævum

Temporibus constant virtutum signa tuarum.

her testimony to this effect*. But *Jews* and *Christians* have adhered to their respective systems through a series of *ages*, environed by difficulties and assailed by temptations; nor have they shewn themselves more tenacious under the gloom of ignorance, than in the sunshine of letters and refinement†: they have remained steadfast, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, rustics and philosophers. Their respective institutions,

* *Omnium primum, rem ad multitudinem imperitam, et illis sæculis rudem, efficacissimam Deorum, metum injiciendum ratus est: qui, quùm DESCENDERE AD ANIMOS SINE ALIQUO COMMENTO MIRACULI NON POSSET, simulat sibi cum deâ Egerid congressus nocturnos esse. Liv. i. 19.* which is applicable also to other founders of a religious polity.

† Compare this statement of a most observable and consoling fact with the case of the *Church of England*, and other such *human contrivances* and engines of *state-policy*; and see whether *they* gain, like the gospel, more *fervent* patrons and admirers in proportion to the discussion of their principles by inquisitive and learned men; notwithstanding the potent attraction of the *golden bait*. Beyond all dispute, if these *establishments* are true, the best argument for the genuineness of *Christianity* is effectually gone; and I wish some charitable *dignitary* would take pity on us and our religion, and supply an equivalent evidence in it's place, *DEANS* and *BISHOPS*, *encrease our faith!*

therefore,

therefore, at their origin, must have been established on *miracles**.

Indeed every day, that passes by, teems with *miracles*. All, that our eyes behold,—all the shifting scene before us, is a *mass* and *series* of *miracles*. And what shall prevent the Supreme Being from *diversifying* his plans and *adorning* his arrangement with additional interference, for specific and important ends? Is it not the same *omnipotence*, that operates, whether by *continuity* of influence, or occasional *accession*? The *evidence* alone is the proper object of our discussion: for who shall dictate the measures of procedure to CONSUMMATE WISDOM? or how shall *man* undertake to decide on the expediency of the *means*, or the *original* motives, of *providential administration*†?

* 2 Pet. i. 16.

Hear then, quoth he, the tenor of my tale,

In sort as I it to that shepheard told:

NO LEASING NEW, nor grandame's FABLE STALE,

But ANCIENT TRUTH, confirm'd with CREDENCE OLD.

Spencer's *Colin Clout*.

† Neque enim, quia se divina mortalibus dedignantur fateri, idcirco, quæ visa non fuerint, dubitabimus facta, quum facta videamus, quæ dubitaverimus esse facienda. *Pacati panegyricus* Theod. Aug. sect. 39.

REMARK

REMARK XLIII.

BUT the whole *New Testament* does not record a more extraordinary fact, than that, which *St. John* declares to have been exhibited under his own inspection.

But when they came to Jesus, and saw, that he was dead already, they brake not his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierct his side, and forthwith came thereout BLOOD AND WATER. And he who saw it, beareth record; and his record is true.*

Dr. *Hunter's* preliminary dissertation to his *anatomical lectures* sufficiently shews the very imperfect knowledge of *anatomy*, that obtained in ages long posteriour to the days of *Christ*. And, in any case, our *unlettered fisherman*, of an occupation, as ancient history abundantly shews, reputed the most vile and wretched, will not easily be suspected of an acquaintance with this subject more accurate and extensive than that of his contemporaries, eminent for their attainments in learning and in science. The argument in this view is very cogent. Nor can it be thought, that an impostor would hazard an assertion respecting consequences, which, could it be supposed to enter his mind at all, greater experience and maturer

* C. xix. V. 33—36.

informa-

information might evince to be absurd, or even impossible. Stronger evidence, as it appears to me, cannot be desired in a case like this. The reality of the fact seems unquestionable. It will stand to the end of time an irrefragable demonstration of *John's* veracity, and of the authority of his *gospel*.

Now this effect here described, the flowing out of *blood and water*, is an indubitable proof, that *Jesus* was ACTUALLY DEAD; and, therefore, that he could not shew himself *alive* to his disciples afterwards but by a *resurrection* from the grave: which event is the foundation, as I have before observed, that supports the whole fabric of the *Christian* revelation. This appearance, I say, was a *proof* of death. The *water*, mentioned by our evangelist, was the *lymphatic fluid* from the *pericardium** and the intermediate parts, added probably to a defluxion from the *mucous glands* of the *lungs*; all which could not fail of being considerably lacerated by the passage of such a weapon, as a *Roman* spear. Had any life still remained in our Saviour's body, and the circulation of the blood not yet ceased; so great an effusion, I presume, must have taken place, as to prevent all discrimination of the *lymph* and similar fluids,

* See *Hippocrates* de corde, init.

that

that issued with it. The transaction is wonderfully striking in every view, and replete with evidence and conviction.

Under this *Remark* I shall take an opportunity of explaining from this text a most remarkable passage in the *epistles* of the same author, upon which I presume the reader would have recourse in vain for satisfaction to any commentator, and which receives immediate illustration and certainty from the preceding observations.

The passage here meant is, *John* v. 8. and should be thus translated :

And there are three, which bear witness on the earth, the BREATH, and the WATER, and the BLOOD : and the end of these three is one.

The circumstance, which is proved by these *three* things in conjunction—the *breath*—the *water*—and the *blood*—is THE DEATH OF CHRIST. Our evangelist had said*, *that Jesus gave up his BREATH*. But we all know, that life is recoverable in many instances after *respiration* ceases. The *breath* alone, therefore, would not *bear* effectual *witness*. But the concurrence of the *water* and the *blood*, issuing from the perforation of the spear, makes the testimony quite *complete*, and constitutes an undeniable demonstration of the cessation of existence.

* *John* xix. 30.

I might subjoin also the testimonies, which *Jews* have borne at different times to the life and character of *Jesus* and his *apostles*, in vindication of the truth of our religion; but as nothing new and important has occurred on this point from my own researches, I shall content myself with referring to some important *remarks* to this effect scattered up and down the works of *Lightfoot*, and to the note in *Bishop Lowth's Isaiah* c. liii. v. 8.

Some may be inclined to think, that I have dwelt upon too many particulars, and not *all* the most important. But it is well known, that what appears of no weight to one man, is convincing to another; and stubborn persuasions are not easily overpowered, but by a circumstantial and copious detail of evidence*. Such as this execution of a good intention may be, I resign it to the candour of the learned and intelligent, who alone are competent to decide.

With a most exquisite observation of our Lord himself I shall close these *Remarks* respecting the *internal Evidences* of the *Christian Revelation*.

* According to a just remark of *Hippocrates*: Αναγκα-
στι πρὸς τὰ ισχυρῶς δοκιοῦντα, τὰ πολλὰ ἱστορία επαγισθαι, εἰ μὴ
τοὶ ἀκούοντα ἐκ τῆς πρὶν γνῶμης μεταστρίψαι, τοῖς ἑαυτῶν τε λόγοις πείσκει:
P. 514.

But

But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, BECAUSE THEY KNOW NOT HIM THAT SENT ME *.

In other words, IGNORANCE and VICE are the GRAND ENEMIES OF REVELATION. Just sentiments of the SUPREME BEING and a *rational system of natural religion*, operating in purity and integrity of life, contrary to all fallacious systems, will, I think, invariably conduct an ingenuous inquirer to *Christianity*; that truly *moral* dispensation of faith and practice, which continues to gain an accession of evidence from the researches and disquisitions of it's votaries, in proportion to the *improvements of philosophy* and the *advancement of the human understanding*. Whether there can be such a person as a *virtuous and conscientious deist* of competent literature†, who has examined with a dispassionate attention *all* the evidences of the gospel, is a question, to which I should not hesitate to give an answer from the text just quoted, upon the authority of JESUS CHRIST.

* John xv. 21.

† Τὸ τοῦ δ', οὐ μὴ τῷ αγαθῷ, οὐ φαίνεται· διαγρῖφει γὰρ ἡ μοχθηρία, καὶ διαψευδισθαι ποιεῖ περὶ τὰς πρακτικὰς ἀρχὰς· ὥστε φαίνεται, ὅτι ἀδυνάτου φρονιμοῦ εἶναι, μὴ οὕτω αγαθοῦ. Arist. eth. Nic. vii. 12.

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